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ABSTRACT

Comprehensive instructions for selecting, staging, directing, and evaluating a program of readers theatre is provided for teachers of the elementary school grades. A step-by-step guide using a wide variety of detailed examples is presented in the first section of the booklet. Various chapters in this section discuss (1) readers theatre's unique contribution to the langauge arts curriculum; (2) material selection, including what to look for in terms of story, plot, character, and dialogue and where to find it in picture storybooks, fairy tales, fables, realistic stories, and plays; (3) guidelines for compiling and adapting material; (4) classroom activities designed to activate interest in readers theatre and to develop an understanding of adapting and staging literary material; and (5) procedures and forms for evaluating student progress. The second section presents a detailed description of a model readers theatre program that was used by a fifth grade class in Woodmere, New York, and two model scripts. An annotated bibliography and photographs are also included. (JL)

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READERS THEATRE

STORY DRAMATIZATION IN THE CLASSROOM

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To my husband, Seymour, and to Jane, Edward, Deborah, and Alan who loved to listen to stories.

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FOREWORD

All the world's a stage when enthusiasm for Readers Theatre strikes. Teachers recognize its value for expanding children's language—through reading as children select and present a scene and through writing as they prepare scripts. But children are drawn to it for the good fun it brings.

Current educational theory shows that children organize their view of the world into schemas, frameworks, or scripts. They make connections between the new and the known by forming bridges of understanding. This strengthens the idea that language related skills should be taught as cohesive interrelated units rather than compartmentalized into separate subjects of spelling, reading, and writing. Readers Theatre exemplifies an application of schema theory in that it interrelates all aspects of language learning. Children read to select a story, they write to adapt it to a script, they speak expressively as they read their lines, and they listen to their peers as coparticipant or audience. Because of the unique advantages of Readers Theatre, teachers eagerly add it to their repertoire of strategies for teaching an integrated language arts curriculum.

Research shows that students' level of reading performance is affected by their interest in the material read. When given reading material at the same readability level, children comprehend the high interest material better than they do the low interest material. Coincidentally, story characteristics that lead to good Readers Theatre scripts are also ones that appear in material of high interest for children. Tight plots with suspense and clear endings, convincing characters who can be visualized in speech and action, vivid themes which add cohesion to a text, and sprightly dialogue that brings a story to life are the features Sloyer seeks for Readers Theatre scripts. They are precisely the features that appeal to readers.

More fortunately, Readers Theatre adds strong motivation to the language arts program. Children involved in adapting a story to a script work enthusiastically and add their own creative touches to the dialogue. Childlike humor seeps through the words they put into characters' mouths. Paraphrasing or using the language verbatim strengthens the process of making the language of literature their own. Presenting the words as a character would say them deepens the meaning of words children read.

In this monograph, Sloyer shows us how to recognize stories that make good Readers Theatre scripts. She draws upon every genre to illustrate characteristics necessary for lively scripts; excerpts from poetry, prose, and folklore are cast into vivid sample scripts. She shows how Readers Theatre differs from usual stage productions by providing adaptations which depend on words more than on physical activity to carry a scene. She shows us step-by-step how to implement Readers Theatre plans: how to select stories, how to turn them into scripts, and how to block and present a scripted story. This practical guidebook can enliven language arts teaching with practices well grounded in theory and research. Furthermore, it's so much fun for everyone.

Bernice E. Cullinan

PART ONE

PROLOGUE

The children wiggle expectantly in their seats. Facing them in front of the classroom are five of their comrades, wearing a variety of colorful hats and clutching scripts that they themselves have adapted. The director nods, a xylophone pings, and a little girl begins, with great expression: "There once was a prince and he wanted a princess." The entire group responds, "But then she must be a real princess." A boy continues: "He traveled right round the world to find one, but there was always something wrong. There were plenty of princesses, but. . . ."

So begins a Readers Theatre. It is not a play. There are no stage sets, no elaborate costumes, no memorized lines. It is not ordinary reading with dull, word-by-word reciting. Readers Theatre is an interpretive reading activity for all the children in a classroom. Readers bring characters to life through their voices and gestures. Listeners are captivated by the vitalized stories and complete the activity by imagining the details of scene and action. Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White call Readers Theatre a shared happening between performers and audience. Each has a part to play. The performers read aloud in a dramatic style while the members of the audience create vivid mental images of things depicted in the literature.[1]

Used in the classroom, Readers Theatre becomes an integrated language event centering on an oral interpretation of literature. The children adapt and present the material of their choice. A story, a poem, a scene from a play, even a song lyric, provide the ingredients for the script. As a thinking, reading, writing, speaking, and listening experience, Readers Theatre makes a unique contribution to our language arts curriculum.

Motivation for Reading and Thinking

James A. Smith tells us that language arts teachers must put strong emphasis on motivational, tension-building forces to encourage pupils to think. He believes that pupils should be challenged at all times and not be allowed to slip into apathy.[2] Albert J. Harris and Edward R. Sipay agree that without adequate motivation any program is sure to be ineffective. "Like a car with a dead battery, it cannot move along because it lacks the needed spark."[3] They also note that preparing and presenting material in front of an audience "is a powerful incentive for many children and creates a natural motive for reading with a critical and evaluative attitude."[4] The expectation of performance is an unrivaled force that maintains motivation throughout Readers Theatre activity.

An Active Approach to Learning

Long ago John Dewey advocated a blend of sensory, motor, and mental processes.[5] Readers Theatre emphasizes process, placing less stress on the *telling* kind

of instruction and more on the *doing*. From start to finish our children are encouraged to tackle all kinds of problems involved with the production—scripting, casting, rehearsing. They are involved actively in decision making and develop the spirit of inquiry and enthusiasm we strive for in every classroom.

Literary Comprehension and Enjoyment

Reading aloud as we do in Readers Theatre enables pupils to understand the full meaning of literature. Robert Post points out that oral reading "more than silent reading can make clear to young readers such literary elements as the role of narrator and characters . . . and the sound structure of verse."[6] Post adds that "a student having difficulties with a selection when he reads it silently may find it much easier to grasp when he reads it out loud or when it is read to him by a student who understands it."[7] Because they are reading in performance for others, the children are stimulated to make close contact with the text. They see, firsthand, how a story builds to its climax and discover how the characters must relate to one another. Our pupils no longer merely observe the literature but become a very real part of "their story."

Good Listening Habits

As Ruth Strickland says, "Children need to learn to listen because listening is not just hearing any more than reading is just seeing."[8] Opportunities for learning to listen occur in Readers Theatre preparations for both performers and audience members. Under natural, enjoyable circumstances, the children plan their program by interacting with each other in small groups. They take turns speaking and listening. During the performance children in the audience are encouraged to listen for specific incidents and are asked to relate their findings afterwards.

Oral Skills

Since Readers Theatre calls for only a suggestion of a story's action, our readers must rely on their vocal abilities to portray a character. To obtain the desired response for their efforts from an audience, the students willingly strive for voice flexibility, good articulation, proper pronunciation, and projection.

Creative Writing

Most play productions invite creative efforts only in the developing of characters in an already prepared script. Readers Theatre departs from this tradition by offering our pupils an opportunity to work closely with good writing models and to engage in creative writing. Children are inspired to add and recreate lines in a story. We may ask them to provide introductory and transitional details as they adapt literature into dramatic form. Often whole blocks of original material written by the children appear in their classroom program.

Listener Benefits

A Readers Theatre performance has many of the same advantages for the listener as for the reader. "His capacity to imagine is extended. Hearing well-written

stories reinforces his use of language skills, encourages him to read with avidity, and stimulates concentrated listening."[9] Experience demonstrates that those who hear dramatized material are inspired to seek out the selections in the future for recreational reading.[10]

Personal and Social Growth

Michael and Pamela Malkin report that children involved with Readers Theatre develop confidence, poise, and a sense of teamwork. They work together toward shared goals.[11] The children see themselves as vital to the success of the project. This perspective gives them a sense of pride and self worth. Also, because Readers Theatre is a short term experience, participants receive satisfaction quickly.

A Bonus for Teachers

"What shall I do for an assembly program?" As teachers we grapple with this frustrating question every term. We are looking for something new, something different. We have limited time and cannot always use a "ready-made" play. Readers Theatre not only provides an unusual and creative approach to producing the class play but also makes available the fables, poems, ballads, and fiction of the finest children's writers. The technique lets each member of our class participate. We can finally include students on all reading levels, not just the few who are usually chosen to perform. In a relatively short time, with a minimum of effort and a maximum of student enthusiasm, a full-blown production is ready for an assembly.

This book is intended for the teachers of elementary grades, K–6, as a means of enriching our English language arts curriculum. The following chapters offer the teacher comprehensive instructions for selecting and adapting literature, staging, directing, and evaluating the presentation. Teachers may be guided by an account of a model Readers Theatre program as it was done in a fifth grade class. Sample scripts provide typically adapted material for use and study. An annotated bibliography of relevant books for teachers and pupils is also included.

Notes

1. Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White, *Readers Theatre Handbook*, 1st ed. rev. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1973), p. 5.

2. James A. Smith, *Adventures in Communication: Language Arts Methods* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1972), pp. 65-66.

3. Albert J. Harris and Edward R. Sipay, *How to Increase Reading Ability*, 6th ed. (New York: David McKay, 1975), p. 315.

4. Ibid., p. 528.

5. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1944), p. 335.

6. Robert Post, "An Oral Interpreter's Approach to the Teaching of Elementary School Literature," *The Speech Teacher* 20, no. 3 (1971): 169.

7. Ibid., p. 170.

8. Ruth G. Strickland, *The Language Arts in the Elementary School*, 2nd ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1958), p. 160.

9. Coger, *Handbook*, p. 126.

10. Shirlee Sloyer, "Show on the Road: Oral Performers as Reading Motivators," *Oral English* 1, no. 1 (1972): 13-15.

11. Michael Malkin and Pamela Malkin, "Readers Theatre: A New Stage for Learning," *Teacher* 93 (April 1976): 70.

SELECTING MATERIAL

If we are to capture children's attention, we must look for a suspenseful story. If we would have them use their heads, we must discover a well-designed plot. A good choice is an imaginative tale which presents characters in a series of events complicated by problems. The basic situation is ripe for something to happen. The action is quick and uninterrupted. The interest turns on some dramatic moment. The ending is clear cut and satisfying.

What to Look For: Story and Plot

According to E. M. Forster there is a difference between a story and a plot.[1] A story is a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. "The king died and then the queen died" is a story. "The king died and then the queen died of grief" is a plot. A story keeps the audience curious. What will happen next? A plot gets them thinking: Why did it happen?

This analysis makes good sense when applied to finding a selection for Readers Theatre. Let us look at "The Emperor's New Clothes" by Hans Christian Andersen as a possible candidate for Readers Theatre and see how it shapes up. The story begins with a short introduction:

> Many years ago there was an Emperor who was so excessively fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on them.

We learn quickly that although the Emperor has a costume for every hour of the day, he still wants more outfits. The scene is set for trouble. Events follow logically. Two slick imposters tell the Emperor of the magical quality of garments which in reality do not exist at all. The Emperor is fooled. Out of fear, everyone else in the kingdom plays along.

The plot is hatched. Suspense builds. Will the Emperor continue to trust the double-talking swindlers? Will the great ruler walk naked in the procession? Will no one, not even his loyal officials, stop him?

The big moment arrives. His majesty will march in the parade without clothes. The ending is at hand. It is uncluttered and surprising:

> "But he doesn't have anything on!" cried a little child.
>
> "Listen to the innocent one," said the proud father. And the people whispered among each other and repeated what the child had said.
>
> "He doesn't have anything on. There's a little child who says that he has nothing on."
>
> "He has nothing on!" shouted all the people at last.
>
> The Emperor shivered for he was certain that they were right; but he thought, "I must bear it until the procession is over." And he walked even more proudly, and the two gentlemen of the imperial bedchamber went on carrying the train that wasn't there.[2]

The point of it all becomes clear. Everyone, including the Emperor, allows themselves to be duped for fear of being thought foolish and incompetent. Perfect! Here is drama at work. There are no subplots, no long descriptions. The language is lively and economical. In a few short pages we understand the wickedness of the tailors, the vanity of the king, the innocence of a little child. "The Emperor's New Clothes" is an engrossing story with an inventive plot. It needs little more than several scripts to bring it to life in the classroom.

Characters

Characters often remain fresh in our memory long after a story is forgotten. This is especially true for dramatized literature. Players and spectators alike are deeply involved with the personalities in a script. The readers become the characters they portray; the listeners imagine themselves in the roles and they too are united with them. Thus, the characters in a tale are Readers Theatre stock in trade.

A character must be compelling and must be understood quickly through the dialogue. There is no place in a dramatization for long stretches of narration describing a character's nature or qualities.

In *McBroom and the Beanstork* by Sid Fleischman, we learn much about Pa as soon as he begins to speak:

> Never and no sir! Me enter the World Champion Liar's contest at the county fair? Why, hair'll grow on fish before I trifle with the truth.

Pa is proud and he has a colorful manner of speech. We read on and discover that he loves and respects his wife and children. But it is easy to see that he considers himself the head of the household when he refuses to succumb to the family's pleadings:

> "Never, nohow and notwithstanding," I snapped. "And let that be the end of it."[3]

Children enjoy finding people like themselves in the stories they read. Many series books present characters who are school age facing some of the same problems as our students. These fictitious youngsters who portray adolescents and their problems in episode after episode are generally stock characters, appealing because of the familiar obstacles they encounter and ultimately overcome. Ellen Grae Derryberry, the title character in Vera and Bill Cleaver's *Lady Ellen Grae*, is a typical eleven year old girl who has come to terms with school, but rebels when her parents want to send her off to Seattle to become a lady. Her father, Jeff, explains the reason for their decision:

> ". . . You're satisfied with the way you are but your mother and I are not."
>
> "You're not, Jeff? What's wrong?"
>
> The silver in Jeff's eyes was the color of old pewter. "Well, there are a number of things. In the first place you're completely uninhibited."
>
> "Uninhibited. Yes, sir, I reckon I am but—"
>
> "Your hair is unbelievable and your clothes are impossible and the condition of your room is shocking," said Jeff. . . .[4]

The kings, beggars, princes, thieves, giants, and dwarfs who inhabit folk tales are usually stereotypes of the human condition. Each represents a trait—virtue, greed, generosity, beauty, compassion. Children easily understand these kinds of people. They provide excellent subjects for dramatized stories. A sentence or two is all that is needed to breathe life into the characters for action on stage. Here are two examples from the Brothers Grimm:

> There was once a widow who had two daughters—one of whom was pretty and industrious, whilst the other was ugly and idle.[5]

> There was once a shoemaker who worked very hard and was very honest; but still he could not earn enough to live upon, and at last all he had in the world was gone, except just leather enough to make one pair of shoes.[6]

That is all we want to know about these personalities. Now they must provide the action and suspense the audience demands. No one will be satisfied until the good are richly rewarded and the wicked are punished.

Sometimes a small measure of introspection reveals so much about a character that it may be included to round out a characterization. In Joseph Krumgold's . . . *And Now Miguel,* Miguel introduces himself:

> I am Miguel. For most people it does not make so much difference that I am Miguel. But for me, often, it is a very great trouble.
>
> It would be different if I were Pedro. He is my younger brother, only seven years old. For Pedro everything is simple. Almost all the things that Pedro wants, he has—without much worry.[7]

Animal characters have delighted young children ever since they listened to "The Three Bears" at bedtime. Fish and talking horses are as readily accepted as fairy-tale or fantasy personalities. They are viewed as typifying human behavior. Animals, like other characters, must pass the test of credibility. Their reactions to situations should be consistent with what we know about them and reveal their true strengths and weaknesses. Consider Kenneth Grahame's classic *The Reluctant Dragon* as the dragon explains to the Boy why he has come to the Downs:

> "—fact is, I'm such a confoundedly lazy beggar!"
>
> "You surprise me," said the Boy, civilly.
>
> "It's the sad truth," the dragon went on, settling down between his paws and evidently delighted to have found a listener at last; "and I fancy that's really how I came to be here. You see all the other fellows were so active and *earnest* and all that sort of thing—always rampaging, and skirmishing, and scouring the desert sands, and pacing the margin of the sea, and chasing knights all over the place, and devouring damsels, and going on generally—whereas I liked to get my meals regular and then to prop my back against a bit of rock and snooze."[8]

This dragon is believable. We sympathize with his fear of being outgoing and chuckle at his desire for creature comforts. His wish to dodge his traditional role occurs to us all, but coming from a dragon, it makes us laugh.

Thus, for successful story dramatization, look for a cast of characters who relate to one another and to the action of the plot; look for characters who have spunk, who grow because of what happens to them in the story; look for characters with whom a child can identify.

Dialogue

When choosing a story to dramatize it is good to glance at the pattern the print makes on the page. Are there plenty of quotes? Are the prose paragraphs brief? Readers Theatre demands material emphasizing dialogue interspersed with spare narrative passages. Brock Cole's picture storybook *The King at the Door* is a fine choice. This tale contains a generous measure of conversation. The few narrative lines introduce the characters and help flesh out the story:

> "Master! Master!" cried Little Baggit. "The King is at the door!"
> What a flurry there was!

> The innkeeper, his wife, and the servant girl all rushed to the window, but all they saw was an old man in a patched shirt, sitting on the bench beside the door.
>
> "That old beggar?" said the innkeeper. "If he's the King, where's his golden crown?"
>
> "He left it at the palace because it's too heavy," said Little Baggit, "but he's the King all right. He told me he was."
>
> "Oh, he *told* you he was the King? Well, that's different," said the innkeeper. "He must be the King, then, mustn't he? And what does his Majesty desire?"
>
> "He wants a glass of wine," said Little Baggit. "He's been walking over his roads all day counting milestones and he's thirsty."[9]

An author with a sense of drama will use dialogue to accomplish what descriptive passages do: create moods, set scenes, depict actions. In *Did You Carry the Flag Today, Charley?* Rebecca Caudill's characters convey vivid imagery in their poetic exchange:

> "You know what I'm painting?" Charley said to Vinnie who sat next to him. "No. What?" asked Vinnie. "A rainbow," said Charley. "I saw a rainbow one time," said Vinnie. "Where was it?" asked Charley. "In the sky, of course," said Vinnie. "Where'd you think it would be?" "I saw a rainbow on the ground one time," said Charley. "Mr. Sizemore," said Vinnie, "you know what Charley said? He said he saw a rainbow on the ground one time. He didn't did he?" "I did too," said Charley. "Where was it, Charley?" asked Mr. Sizemore. "In a puddle," said Charley. "At a filling station."[10]

Mazel, the spirit of good luck and Shlimazel, the spirit of bad luck, set the scene for action in *Mazel and Shlimazel* by Isaac Bashevis Singer:

> "I know millions of ways to make people happy."
>
> "I have billions of ways of making them unhappy."
>
> "That's not true. You always use the same old tricks," Mazel insisted. "I'll bet that you can't even find a single new way of spoiling something nice I've done."
>
> "Is that so? What will you wager?" Shlimazel countered.
>
> "If you win," Mazel said, "I will give you a barrel of the precious wine of forgetfulness. If you lose, you keep your red nose out of my business for fifty years."[11]

Straight talk is easy to adapt. In Judy Blume's *Freckle Juice*, about realistic youngsters, the dialogue makes its impact on the audience who is not told *about* what happens, but sees for itself. The staccato-like conversation builds an atmosphere of excitement:

> "Did you bring it?" he asked.
>
> "Bring what?" Sharon opened her eyes real wide.
>
> "You know what! The secret recipe for freckle juice."
>
> "Oh that! I have it—right here." Sharon patted her pocket.
>
> "Well, let's see it."
>
> "Do you have fifty cents?" Sharon asked.
>
> "Sure—right here." Andrew patted *his* pocket.
>
> "I'm not going to show it to you until you pay," Sharon said.
>
> Andrew shook his head. "Oh no! First I want to see it."
>
> "Sorry Andrew. A deal's a deal!" Sharon opened a book and pretended to read.
>
> "Andrew Marcus!" Miss Kelly said. "Will you please sit down. The second bell just rang. This morning we'll begin with arithmetic. Nicky, please pass out the yellow paper. When you get your paper begin working on the problems on the board."[12]

When read aloud, repetition of words and phrases produce rhythm patterns which children enjoy. Cumulative stories containing passages recited over and

over again make good listening. Expecting a familiar portion of the script, listeners become part of the performance as they mouth the lines. At the same time repetition encourages mental pictures which underscore the meaning of the language. Who can resist the sheer fun of exaggeration which occurs in Dr. Seuss's sentimental story, *Horton Hatches the Egg*? Horton, a compassionate elephant, helps out a Lazy Bird by vowing to sit on her nest until her baby is born, saying again and again:

> I meant what I said
> And I said what I meant . . .
> An elephant's faithful
> One-hundred per cent![13]

Narrators are an integral part of a Readers Theatre production. When a story is "up on its feet," they are speaking characters. Descriptive passages which are essential to the story are generally assigned to the narrators to read. These sections are as important to the production as the dialogue. They should help create believable characters and vivid settings. Consider the following mood-setting excerpt from Leo Lionni's *Frederick*, about a mouse who provides warmth and beauty for his friends during the long cold winter. Imagine the narrator reading aloud with the other characters:

> "And how about the colors, Frederick?" they asked anxiously. "Close your eyes again," Frederick said. And when he told them of the blue periwinkles, the red poppies in the yellow wheat, and the green leaves of the berry bush, they saw the colors as clearly as if they had been painted in their minds.[14]

Here writing is clear and concrete while the choice and order of words are poetic.

Where to Look: Picture Storybooks

A good place to begin the search for Readers Theatre material is on the picture storybook shelf. Many of these gaily illustrated stories are sophisticated enough to be performed *by* and *for* any age group. Best of all, the children can help in the selection process.

Storybooks make good scripts because they are written to be read aloud to children. The words and phrases follow the rhythmic pattern of conversation. Books designed for beginning readers also work well. When an author writes within the limits of an easy-to-read storybook, he or she makes the sentences short, the plot taut, the characters lifelike. A dose of humor not found in longer books is often added. Children need not grapple with difficult vocabulary before having the pleasure of adapting and performing a script.

Sonia Levitin's comic storybook *A Single Speckled Egg* provides colorful dialogue that can be turned into a script with very little effort. The central characters, Abel, Nagel, and Zeke, are three farmers who worry together. Day in and day out they talk about their bad luck:

> One afternoon Abel sighed. "My best hen laid only a single speckled egg today. What could be the matter with that hen?"
>
> Said Nagel, "Your hen might stop laying altogether and a speckled egg, you know, is bad luck."
>
> "Bad luck," said Zeke, "could only mean that your whole hen house will burn down. Then what will you do? You will have to sell your farm!"[15]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The next afternoon Nagel groaned, "My spotted cow kicked over a bucket of milk today! The bucket hit me on the leg. Oh, pain! Oh, misery!"

> "By tomorrow your leg might be swollen," said Abel, "you could be lame for weeks."
>
> "You might be in bed for months," cried Zeke. "Then who will tend your fields? You will have to sell your farm."[16]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The next afternoon Zeke shouted, "My horse ate mustard weed today and got a stomachache. He would not let me hitch him to the plow."
>
> Said Abel, "Mustard weed can poison a horse! It might be sick for weeks."
>
> Said Nagel, "That horse is as good as dead. What use is a farmer without a horse? You will have to sell your farm?"[17]

The three finally worry themselves into a decision to sell their farms. The farmers' wives try to reassure their husbands that all will be well. At last the women seek advice from a wise old teacher who tells them:

> You must learn to worry even better than your husbands. If they weep, you must weep harder. If they groan, you must groan longer. If they shout, you must shout louder.[18]

The wives play their part and effectively outdo their husbands. Of course the farms are spared and the worrying is over forever more.

A Single Speckled Egg is peopled by hilarious characters in lively discourse. Add to this some well-placed shrieks, shouts, and groans for an enactment that is fun for all.

The Judge by Harve Zemach, *The King's Tea* by Trinker Hakes Noble, *The Terrible Tiger* by Jack Prelutsky, *The Turnip* by Janina Domanska, and any number of stories by Dr. Seuss are unusually imaginative books containing many characters. These stories, suitable for all grade levels (K–6), are well liked by younger audiences. The rhyme and repetition spirit readers into a rollicking pace which, in turn, is caught up by the spectators who join in the recitation of familiar words and phrases.

A brief, easy-to-read book written in rhyme which calls for audience participation is *Frances Face Maker* by William Cole and Tomi Ungerer. It asks the listeners to play along by making the faces described in the text:

> Now raise one eyebrow!
> Let's see you wink!
> Look like you're having
> A deep, deep think!
> YOU DO IT![19]

The book comes alive when each child reads one verse. More copycat maneuvers can be devised by the class to make a whole program of Readers Theatre with mime.

For beginning readers or others struggling with reading problems, there are many more easy storybooks suitable for adaptation. Particularly clever are two Marjorie Weinman Sharmat stories, *Nate the Great* and *Nate the Great Goes Undercover*. Here we meet Nate, the junior sleuth who sounds very much like a TV detective gone witty:

> I, Nate the Great, am a detective.
> I work hard,
> I rest hard.
> Tonight I am resting hard from my last case.[20]

With their first person voice these tales can be effortlessly dramatized by even the youngest reader.

Also in the simple mystery category are Crosby Bonsall's stories, *The Case of the Hungry Stranger*, *The Case of the Cat's Meow*, and *The Case of the Scaredy Cats*.

These easy reading books star four likeable private eyes, Wizard, Tubby, Skinny, and Snitch; they contain large blocks of dialogue, which offer a rewarding script-writing and reading experience.

A program of riddles and funny tongue-twisting passages can be developed with such selections as *Oh Say Can You Say* by Dr. Seuss, *Moris and Boris (Three Stories)* by Bernard Weiseman, *Who's a Pest?* by Crosby Bonsall, and *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish. When we call on the audience to participate, everyone has fun with this sensible foolishness, no matter their reading ability.

Older children, grades 4–6, enjoy working on a theme such as overcoming loneliness. Good choices in this category include *Crow Boy* by Taro Yashima, *Lonely Veronica* by Roger Duvoisin, *Maxie* by Mildred Kantrowitz, and the especially tender *Mr. Silver and Mr. Gold* by Dale Borman Fink.

Other storybooks for children of any age which are easy to dramatize are Robert Kraus's *Pinchpenny Mouse*, James Thurber's *Many Moons*, Sonia Levitin's *Nobody Stole the Pie*, Judith Viorst's *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, and Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*.

Even the "how to" picture books can be adapted with exciting results. *Girls and Boys Write-a-Letter Book* by Stan Tusan is a dramatic lesson in letter writing. Instructions and samples of letters and notes children may have to write in everyday life are included in these pages.

When the material is prepared for Readers Theatre, concepts are learned in palatable style. One idea for Mr. Tusan's text is to have five children represent the five parts of a letter. Standing in the appropriate place on the floor or pointing to a chart or a chalkboard, readers introduce their characters in this way:

I am the heading.
612 East 50 Street
New York, New York 11170
June 13, 1981

I am the salutation.
Dear Uncle Jim,

I am the body.
I was very happy to receive your letter of June 5th. Thank you for all the news and I'll send you the necessary information by this Friday. Good luck to you!

I am the complimentary close.
Your loving niece.

I am the signature.
Susan

Follow this unique opening by a dramatization of the occasions that require a letter. One player receives a gift, another plans a party, a third is away at camp, while a fourth hears of a friend's illness. Of course each situation will end with a reading of the proper letter. This is a fine opportunity to incorporate some original correspondence from the class.

Another happy choice in the information-book category is Harvey Weiss's *How to Be a Hero*. Mr. Weiss provides us with a series of comic situations about the most heroic ways to solve problems. These incidents are presented in the realm of fantasy, but the solutions make real sense. A class divided into groups, each presenting one segment of the book, will enjoy playing characters such as mean gorillas who hijack a dirigible on the way to a zoo in Budapest.

Along similar lines are Sesyle Joslin's *What Do You Say Dear?* and *What Do You Do Dear?* These two books contain absurd predicaments which end with asking the title questions. The answers teach proper etiquette. Here, too, an entire program can be built around these hilarious circumstances with full class participation.

A Readers Theatre presentation in which several grades take part can be developed by selecting a theme and having each grade prepare a story or two. For example, a topic that interests most children is "What will I be when I grow up?" Robert Kraus's *Owliver* and *Leo, the Late Bloomer* are two picture books on this subject for the very young reader. Middle grades will enjoy *Girls Can Be Anything* by Norma Klein and also the Carla Greene series, What Do They Do? The instructive series by Gloria and Esther Goldreich about careers in the law, music, architecture, medicine, and others is suited to the upper grade child. Pooling its resources, it is possible for an entire school to create a program for assembly presentations devoted to this theme.

Fairy Tales

> In olden times when wishing still helped one there lived a king whose daughters were all beautiful, but the youngest was so beautiful that the sun itself, which has seen so much, was astonished whenever it shone in her face.[22]

Set a fourth grader to read on a classroom stage and the king's daughter stands before us. The language of the fairy tale begins to do its work. Imagination soars! Everyday expectations are suspended in favor of the make believe. The spell is on!

May Hill Arbuthnot tells us that fairy tales "are a legacy from anonymous artists of the past, the old wives and grannies as well as the professional storytellers. They were first created orally and passed on by word of mouth for generations before the printing press caught up with them."[23] Indeed, a fairy tale was the entertainment of its time. It sustained interest then and it survives to this day for the same reasons. A fairy tale starts swiftly, moves directly through its magical episodes, and ends with a gratifying finale. Universal themes—love, courage, goodness, wickedness—around which the story is built develop through the deeds of characters, not through idle talk.

A fairy tale satisfies a child's need to fantasize. The dramatization gives shape to these fantasies. A boy dreams of overcoming a powerful enemy; he becomes the valiant little tailor outmaneuvering two giants. A girl imagines herself with magical powers; she is transformed into the miller's daughter spinning straw to gold for the king's heart. The young readers create a fabulous world and allow the spectators to inhabit it.

A well-liked tale is "The Fisherman and His Wife" by the Brothers Grimm. Children will find this one easy to prepare for presentation. The beginning of the story is assigned to a narrator who sets the scene, introduces the characters, and describes the first action:

> *Narrator:* There was once upon a time a fisherman who lived with his wife in a miserable hovel close by the sea. Every day he went out fishing. Once, as he was sitting with his rod, looking at the clear water, his line went down far below, and when he drew it up again, he brought out a large flounder.

Three characters, the obedient fisherman, his greedy wife Isabel, and an enchanted flounder, advance the plot:

> *Flounder:* Hark, you fisherman, I pray you, let me live. I am no flounder really, but an enchanted prince.
>
> *Fisherman:* Come, there is no need for so many words about it. A fish that can talk I should certainly let go anyway.
>
> *Wife:* Husband, have you caught nothing today?

The fisherman returns to the flounder to wish for better circumstances. Joining the others, the narrator supplies transitions:

> *Narrator:* When the man went home, his wife was no longer in the hovel, but instead of it there stood a small cottage, and she was sitting on a bench before the door.

The plot speeds along, Isabel will not be satisfied, not with a cottage, nor a great stone castle. She wants to be King, Emperor, Pope. The end comes with no more fanfare than the beginning:

> *Flounder:* Well, what does she want, now?
>
> *Fisherman:* Alas, she wants to be like unto God.
>
> *Flounder:* Go to her and you will find her back again in the dirty hovel.
>
> *Narrator:* And there they are still living at this very time.[24]

There is magic here, but not without logic. Each event follows in understandable sequence. The plot unfolds through plainspoken dialogue and direct narrative passages. Engrossed in this fantasy demonstrating the foolishness of greed, young adapters will have a good time rewriting and reading "The Fisherman and His Wife" for the Readers Theatre stage.

Other exciting tales from the Brothers Grimm suitable for grades 4–6 are the following: "The Frog King," "The Brave Little Tailor," "The Four Musicians," "Clever Elsie," "Rumpelstiltskin," and "The Goose Girl." Hans Christian Andersen's best stories are these: "The Emperor's New Clothes," "The Ugly Duckling," and "The Princess and the Pea." All of these and more are in *Tales from Grimm* and *More Tales from Grimm* freely translated by Wanda Gag, *Hans Christian Andersen: The Complete Fairy Tales and Stories* translated from the Danish by Erik Christian Haugaard, and *Time for Fairy Tales Old and New* compiled by May Hill Arbuthnot.

Favorite old fairy tales that make first-rate dramatizations for grades 1–4 include the following: "The Gingerbread Boy," "Henny Penny," "The Little Red Hen and The Grain of Wheat," "The Three Billy-Goats Gruff," "The Turnip," "The Old Woman and Her Pig." These are accumulative stories containing many characters. They can be found in *The Fairy Tale Treasury* (selected by Virginia Haviland) by Raymond Briggs.

Some popular folk stories workable for Readers Theatre have been singled out and updated in picture books. *Strega Nona* is an old tale retold by Tomie de Paola. This story can be adapted with enough parts for an entire class. In it, Big Anthony, Strega Nona's helper, gets into trouble when he uses her magic pasta pot to impress the villagers. The fun begins when the townspeople of Calabria try to stop the pot from covering the town with spaghetti. There is much prancing about and carrying on until the town is saved by Strega Nona and punishment is meted out to Big Anthony:

> "All right, Anthony, you wanted pasta from my magic pot," Strega Nona said, "and I want to sleep in my little bed tonight. So start eating."
> And he did—poor Big Anthony.[25]

Could Anything Be Worse? is a Yiddish tale retold by Marilyn Hirsh in which the Rabbi advises a man that things have to get much worse before they can get better. *Go and Shut the Door* by Nola Langner, taken from a seventeenth-century Arabian tale, is a funny story of a salty sea captain and his new wife, who would rather see everything stolen from their home than settle their argument over who

will get up and shut the door. *The First Morning,* an African myth retold by Margery Bernstein and Janet Kobrin, is a tender story about a mouse who goes above the sky to bring down light. All of these will make inventive scripts.

A haunting ancient Japanese folk tale entitled *The Stonecutter,* adapted by Gerald McDermott, creates an unusual dramatization. Six or seven children participate in the reading, by representing Tasaku, as he changes from the lowly stonecutter to a wealthy prince, a burning sun, a treacherous storm cloud, and a mighty mountain. The spirit who lives in the mountains is yet another character who comes to life as a mysterious disembodied voice (reading into a cardboard megaphone, perhaps), granting Tasaku's every foolish longing.

Several collections contain tales from other lands. Particularly interesting for Readers Theatre is *The Wise Men of Gotham,* adapted by Malcolm Carrick, containing twelve stories about silly villagers of Gotham. *Tales of Faraway Folk,* retold by Babette Deutsch, contains the fascinating Russian tale, "A Clever Judge." *Let's Steal the Moon, Jewish Tales, Ancient and Modern,* retold by Blanche Luria Serwer, is a humorous book with delightful stories such as "Did the Tailor Have a Nightmare?" and "Tales About Chelm, the City of Fools." Any one of the above books can supply a class with material enough for a full program about foolish folk. Children enjoy feeling wiser and brighter than the characters in these stories.

For very short, lively folk tales see *The Peasant and the Donkey, Tales of the Near and Middle East* by H. M. Nahmed. Harold Courlander and Wolf Leslau's *The Fire on the Mountain* contains a wise title story which shows how one is no more warmed by a fire seen at a distance than is fed by the smells coming from a kitchen.

A teacher may use fairy tales to make up a complete Readers Theatre folk program. Short tales are easily compiled into a script with a theme. A long work such as "Patient Griselda" in *Perrault's Classic French Fairy Tales* is an entire program in itself. The most creative use of the fairy tale is to include it together with a collection of other literature. Combine it with a realistic story, a poem or two, an information book and presto! there is a touch of magic and surprise.

Fables

Fables are compact stories that illustrate one aspect of human behavior. These tales unfold simply in a way that children understand. Characters, usually animals with human qualities, are taught a lesson because of their selfishness, greed, or stupidity. A frog, trying to be as big as an ox, blows himself up until he bursts. A foolish lamb follows a wolf in sheep's clothing. After playing a trick on a crow, a fox is repaid with dinner served in a long-necked jar with a narrow mouth. Each brief story ends with an appropriate moral: "Self conceit may lead to self destruction," "Appearances are deceptive," "One bad turn deserves another."

Because fables are written in only two or three paragraphs, they are quickly adapted in one class session. Working together, the class creates an entire script in the limited space of a chalkboard. Children and teacher change some of the narrative passages into dialogue. New characters are invented. Lines are parceled out. Snatches of action and vocal sound effects are suggested. The finished script may look like this:

The Fox and the Cat

Narrator: A Fox was boasting to a Cat of its clever devices for escaping its enemies.

Fox: I have a whole bag of tricks which contain a hundred ways of escaping my enemies.

Cat: I have only one, but I can generally manage with that.

Narrator: Just at that moment they heard the cry of a pack of hounds coming towards them.

Hounds: oo-oo-oo-oo

Narrator: The Cat immediately scampered up a tree and hid itself in the boughs.

Cat: This is my plan. What are you going to do?

Narrator: The Fox thought first of one way, then the other.

Fox: (*Dashing about.*) Well, maybe I could run under a bush, or perhaps dive down into a hole, or more likely dash down the path . . .

Narrator: While the Fox was debating the hounds came nearer and nearer.

Hounds: oo-oo-oo-oo-OO-OO-OO

Narrator: At last the Fox in his confusion, was caught up by the hounds and soon killed by the huntsman. The Cat looked on.

Cat: BETTER ONE SAFE WAY THAN A HUNDRED ON WHICH YOU CANNOT DEPEND.

With open-classroom practice, the children will soon be able to work on their own, or in groups, to script longer and more complex stories.

Collecting five or six fables for a Readers Theatre presentation may be enough to involve all the children in a class. Fables can also be added to a compiled script with other kinds of literature—poems, play excerpts, riddles—for a diversified finished product. In keeping with a theme of brotherhood, for instance, a poignant fable to include is Aesop's "The Lion and the Mouse." In this tale a little mouse who is spared by a lion repays him by gnawing through ropes to free the huge beast from the hunters. Moral: "Little friends may prove great friends."

Another story illustrating the same theme is "The Bundle of Sticks." Here a dying man asks his sons to break a bundle of sticks. When they are unable to do so, he has the bundle untied and asks the sons to break each stick separately. This they are able to do. Moral: "Union gives strength."

There are many editions of the popular fables. In Anne Terry White's *Aesop's Fables,* the animals talk to each other in contemporary style. These stories are especially easy to dramatize. For example, "The Country Mouse and the City Mouse" offers this simple scene:

> "My dear, how are you?" said the Country Mouse. She kissed her cousin the City Mouse and made her welcome in her snug little hole.
>
> "How good of you to travel all this way to visit me," she went on. "Well, you shall see how we country folk live. Not badly at all."[26]

Other versions of Aesop include Louis Untermeyer's *Aesop's Fables,* James Reeves's *Fables from Aesop,* and Joseph Jacobs's *The Fables of Aesop.*

Using Aesop as his inspiration, La Fontaine turned many of the fables into verse. These can be found in *Fables of La Fontaine,* translated by Margaret Wise Brown, and *A Hundred Fables* by Jean de la Fontaine.

Although James Thurber's *Fables for Our Time* was written for adults, children enjoy some of these zany tales because of the surprise endings to familiar situa-

tions. Two of the best are "The Moth and the Star" and "The Little Girl and the Wolf." In the latter, an updated Red Riding Hood shoots the wolf because she decides he really does not look like her grandmother, even in a nightgown. Moral: "It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays, as it used to be."[27]

Poetry

> If you are a dreamer, come in,
> If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
> A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer. . . .
> If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire
> For we have some flax-golden tales to spin.
> Come in!
> Come in![28]

So begins Shel Silverstein's collection of poems, *Where the Sidewalk Ends.* This book plus his later work, *A Light in the Attic,* provide a reservoir of out-of-the-ordinary verse for children. The poetry is playful:

> Her mama said, "Don't eat with your fingers."
> "OK," said Ridiculous Rose
> So she ate with her toes![29]

Mischievous:

> Oh, if you're a bird, be an early bird
> And catch the worm for your breakfast plate.
> If you're a bird, be an early bird—
> But if you're a worm, sleep late.[30]

Startling:

> But an eagle came and swooped me up
> And through the air we flied,
> But he dropped me in a boiling lake
> A thousand miles wide.
> And you'll never guess what I did then—
> I DIED.[31]

Hilarious:

> From dusk to dawn,
> From town to town,
> Without a single clue,
> I seek the tender, slender foot
> To fit this crystal shoe.
> From dusk to dawn,
> I try it on
> Each damsel that I meet.
> And I still love her so, but oh,
> I've started hating feet.[32]

And sensitive:

> I will not play at tug o' war.
> I'd rather play at hug o' war,
> Where everyone hugs
> Instead of tugs.[33]

The pleasure will double when these poems are read aloud.

Rhythmic, short poems interspersed with other material add a melodic quality to a Readers Theatre program. Poetry that deals with everyday concerns such as

John T. Alexander's "The Winning of the TV West," Carl Sandburg's "Arithmetic," John Ciardi's "When Mommy Slept Late, Daddy Cooked Breakfast" are fun to dramatize. Include one or two along with a fairy tale, a fable, an information book, and an excerpt from realistic fiction to make a lively, diversified script.

We can develop a full-length program around the work of one author. Mary O'Neill writes books of verse on a variety of themes. *Hailstones and Halibut Bones* is poetry about color. In *Take a Number* the poems capture mathematical concepts. *Fingers Are Always Bringing Me News* creates an awareness of the tactile world. Judith Viorst's *If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries* is an up-to-the-minute assemblage of treasures about the vagaries of life for children and their parents. Any one of these collections can be turned into a solid production with a part for each child in the class.

James Reeves in his book, *Understanding Poetry*, says that children find poems most satisfying that tell a complete story without sentimentality.[34] Robert Francis's "Base Stealer" exemplifies these qualities and provides an exciting, dramatic segment for Readers Theatre:

> Poised between going on and back, pulled
> Both ways taut like a tightrope-walker,
> Fingertips pointing the opposites,
> Now bouncing tiptoe like a dropped ball
> Or a kid skipping rope, come on, come on,
>
> Running a scattering of steps sidewise,
> How he teases, skitters, tingles, teases,
> Taunts them, hovers like an ecstatic bird,
> He's only flirting, crowd him, crowd him,
> Delicate, delicate, delicate, delicate—now![35]

We can combine "Base Stealer" with other selections for a lively program about sports. A good choice is Ernest Lawrence Thayer's "Casey at the Bat." The poem builds in momentum as Casey, star of the Mudville nine, with two strikes against him, waits for the next pitch. The crowd and our audience watch expectantly:

> They saw his face grow stern and cold; they saw his muscles strain,
> And they knew that Casey would not let that ball go by again.
> The sneer is gone from Casey's lips, his teeth are clenched with hate,
> He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;
> And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
> And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.[36]

To the very last line the poet keeps all waiting for the call. Then it comes:

> And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;
> But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has Struck Out.[36]

"The Pied Piper of Hamelin" by Robert Browning furnishes material for a full length program. The poem tells of a mysterious musician who is hired to rid a small town of its rats. Utilizing one or two narrators, several small groups, and some solo readers, an entire class is involved in the delivery. An excerpt illustrates a possible adaptation:

> *Narrator A:* At last the people in a body
> To the Town Hall came flocking:
>
> *Group I:* 'Tis clear,
>
> *Narrator B:* Cried they,
>
> *Group II:* Our Mayor's a noddy;

Group III: And as for our Corporation—

All: Shocking.

Man: To think that we buy gowns lined with ermine

Woman: For dolts that can't or won't determine

All: What's best to rid us of our vermin!

Other narrative poems which work well include Alfred Noyes's "The Highwayman," and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Paul Revere's Ride."

There are a number of poetry anthologies in which the poems are often categorized by subjects. A particularly good one is *Straight on Till Morning* by Helen Hill, Agnes Perkins, and Althea Helbie. Included are such divisions as "Funny and Fabulous Friends," "Out of This World," "Mysteries," and "Once There Was and Was Not." In addition to classifying the poems, these headings provide themes for Readers Theatre productions.

Holidays are perfect opportunities to celebrate with a poetry festival. *Monster Poems,* edited by Daisy Wallace, is a fun collection for Halloween. It contains seventeen selections about all manner of monsters: what they look like, where they go, who they eat, and how scary they appear. *The Subject Guide to Poetry for Children and Young People,* published by the American Library Association, lists other suggestions for special occasions.

Realistic Stories

Readers Theatre becomes a unique event when it dramatizes life as it really is. Children, struggling with the problems of school and family life, are drawn into a story portraying characters with similar difficulties. They are exposed to the conflicts and concerns of others. Captivated by the personal nature of realistic stories, youngsters empathize with the oral reading, discovering more about life and about themselves.

For realistic fiction to succeed as dramatization, it must be a candid exploration of events that are meaningful to children. In *The Hundred Dresses* Eleanor Estes writes about Wanda Petronski, a poor Polish girl who is made the brunt of an on-going joke by her classmates. By the end of the story the children learn what their heartlessness meant to the Petronskis, who finally feel obliged to leave the town. The book has parts for a class full of active characters. With some rewriting it can be transformed into an impressive script.

Divorce is a sensitive condition which concerns many boys and girls these days. Peggy Mann's *My Dad Lives in a Downtown Hotel* and Judy Blume's *It's Not the End of the World* treat divorce in a down-to-earth manner which helps put the event in its proper perspective.

Don't Take Teddy by Babbis Baastad probes the world of a retarded child and his family. Jean Little's *Kate* and *Look Through My Window* explore friendship and what it means to be Jewish. Marilyn Sachs in *Marv* and *The Bears House* writes of the problems facing children who are nonconformists—the "dreamers."

Judy Blume's *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* is a first-person story narrated by a twelve-year-old girl. Through personal chats with God, Margaret discusses her problems about religion, sex, and growing up:

> Are you there God? It's me, Margaret. . . . Do you think I'll get Philip Leroy for a partner? It's not so much that I like him as a person, God, but as a boy he's very handsome.[38]

Use chapter 2 for the theme of moving and meeting a new friend; chapter 4 is about the first day at school. Or, the entire book can be condensed and adapted into a provocative script.

Children who know little about World War II can still empathize with the young girl and her sister who are forced to hide from the Germans in the house of a Dutch family. Johanna Reiss writes about those years in a true story entitled *The Upstairs Room*. This work makes an inspiring theatrical experience for grades 5 and 6.

It's Like This Cat, the Newbery Medal winner by Emily Neville, chronicles the life of a fourteen-year-old New York City boy. The dialogue is natural and the pace is swift. Young people will have fun adapting the entire book, or singling out specific adventures to dramatize.

Other books for grades 3 through 6 where any chapter can be worked into dramatic form include the following: *The Moffats* by Eleanor Estes, *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume, *Henry Huggins* by Beverly Cleary, and the "Betsy," "Eddie," and "Penny" books by Carolyn Haywood. These stories contain popular characters about the same age as the audience who move through incident after incident with spirit and humor.

Basal readers, textbooks, and even newspapers can supply material for Readers Theatre. In *Bridges*, a level 15 reading text, a piece entitled "Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers" by Evan Wright is a true account of Grace Bedell, who wrote a letter to Abraham Lincoln suggesting he grow whiskers. To her surprise he answered her letter and grew the beard. This selection, coupled with more material about Lincoln, or other United States Presidents, would make an interesting compiled script for Readers Theatre. Similarly, social studies texts containing accounts of historical personalities and adventures can provide opportunities for rewriting and adapting material to be used in a production.

Plays

A play has all the obvious ingredients needed for Readers Theatre. Characters and action are defined through dialogue. The best plays are those that do not rely too much on staging and those that can be shortened without losing the author's intent. As with full-length books and long stories, the part of a narrator may be written into the script to fill in the needed details. We can also extract short scenes or sequences from plays to be used as independent units.

A scene in Mary Chase's two-act play *Mrs. McThing* can be developed into an exciting and funny Readers Theatre script. The story concerns a spoiled, rich boy who finds himself involved with gangsters. Poison Eddie, the chief gangster speaks:

> *Eddie:* How wah yuh boys? Don't answer. The cops are out like flies. I'm hotter than a firecracker but they can't prove a thing. There's ice in this town but it's all behind plate glass. I've cased this burg from end to end and all I bring home is alibis. What's on the agenda? Call a meeting! Call a meeting!
>
> *Stinker:* That's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna call a meeting.
>
> *Eddie:* Call it then and don't just stand there sayin' you're gonna call it—call it.
>
> *Stinker:* I'm not gonna just stand here sayin' I'm gonna call it—I'm gonna call it. (*Whistles.*) I called it.

> *Eddie:* Boys, the question before us at this meeting is this one: Do we take this boy we call the squirt out of the dish-washing department and promote him to the mobster department.[39]

Escape to Freedom by Ossie Davis is a play about young Frederick Douglass's escape from slavery. The play presents songs, narrative, and dialogue. Readers may assume the various roles with ease in a Readers Theatre adaptation. Consistent with this theme of courage and commitment is a play by Alice Childress, *When the Rattlesnake Sounds.* This inspiring drama portrays one summer in Harriet Tubman's life when she works as a laundress to raise money for the abolitionist cause.

Alice Childress's one-act play *Let's Hear It for the Queen* starts where the story of the Knave of Hearts who stole some tarts ends. Written in a crisp, contemporary style it is full of exaggerated humor:

> *The Queen:* I can be a queen anywhere because deep down within myself, I'm a lovely queenly person.
>
> *The Knave:* But on the outside of yourself you're kinda homely and sorta dumb. You'll never remember all of your lines. You're taking on a real challenge.
>
> *The Queen:* What's a challenge?
>
> *The Knave:* Something nobody thinks you can do.[40]

Based on the "noodlehead" tales of Eastern European folk literature is *Silly Soup: Ten Zany Plays* by Carol Korty. This collection is fun to use as Readers Theatre. Each play, only five or ten minutes long, effectively calls on reader interaction and audience imagination.

Broadway musical comedies can be used for our purpose. Story lines of these plays are often simple and imaginative, appealing to children as well as adults. A perennial favorite is *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown,* based on the comic strip "Peanuts" by Charles M. Schultz. Although the play is in two acts, continuity is not an essential feature. Any of the amusing fragments can be extracted and combined for use in Readers Theatre. The well-known characters describe their problems in a whimsical, philosophical dialogue:

> *Charlie Brown:* I think lunchtime is about the worst time of day for me. Always having to sit here alone. Of course, sometimes mornings aren't so pleasant either—waking up and wondering if anyone would really miss me if I never got out of bed.[41]

Musicals which upper grade (5–6) students enjoy are *1776* by Sherman Edwards and Peter Stone, and *The Fantasticks* by Tom Jones. For younger children *Maurice Sendak's Really Rosie* is a flexible collection of entertaining sequences about an unusual little girl. *Once Upon a Mattress* by Jay Thomson, Marshall Burer, and Deal Fuller is a witty version of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Princess and the Pea." All of these are easy to convert into Readers Theatre.

To find plays categorized under subject headings, theme, and occasions, see Barbara Kreider's *Index to Children's Plays in Collections,* which also provides a cast analysis of each play with a directory of publishers. *Plays, the Drama Magazine for Young People,* published monthly, contains some original and timely plays which are useful for Readers Theatre.

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3. Sid Fleischman, *McBroom and the Beanstork* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), pp. 5-6.
4. Vera Cleaver and Bill Cleaver, *Lady Ellen Grae* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1968), p. 14.
5. May Hill Arbuthnot, comp., "Mother Holle," *Time for Fairy Tales* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1952), p. 37.
6. Arbuthnot, "The Elves and the Shoemaker," *Time for Fairy Tales*, p. 33.
7. Joseph Krumbold, . . . *And Now Miguel* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1953), p. 1.
8. Kenneth Grahame, *The Reluctant Dragon* (New York: Holiday House, 1953), pp. 10-11.
9. Brock Cole, *The King at the Door* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), pp. 1-5.
10. Rebecca Caudill, *Did You Carry the Flag Today, Charley?* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 50.
11. Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Mazel and Shlimazel* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967), pp. 2-4.
12. Judy Blume, *Freckle Juice* (New York: Four Winds Press, 1971), p. 15.
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14. Leo Lionni, *Frederick* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), p. 23.
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16. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
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22. Arbuthnot, "The Frog King," *Time for Fairy Tales*, p. 41.
23. Arbuthnot, *Time for Fairy Tales*, p. 4.
24. Arbuthnot, "The Fisherman and His Wife," *Time for Fairy Tales*, pp. 54-58.
25. Tomie de Paola, *Strega Nona* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 28.
26. Anne Terry White, *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Random House, 1946), p. 10.
27. James Thurber, *Fables for Our Time and Famous Poems* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940), p. 5.
28. Shel Silverstein, *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 9.
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30. Ibid., p. 30.
31. Ibid., p. 43.
32. Shel Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), p. 162.
33. Silverstein, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, p. 19.
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36. Ernest Lawrence Thayer, "Casey at the Bat," in *Hold Fast to Dreams*, ed. Arna Bontemps (Chicago: Follett Publishing, 1966), p. 100.
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COMPILING AND ADAPTING MATERIAL

A script can be developed from a single work of prose, poetry, or drama. Some of the most interesting programs, however, result from a compilation of various kinds of literature organized to tell a story, illustrate a point, or create a mood. A complete presentation may contain adaptations of a short story, a play, a book excerpt, and some poetry. The script is then a fable consolidated into a definable unit by a theme, an introduction, transitions, and a conclusion.

The cohesive element of a compiled script is its central theme or idea. A workable theme is a packaged expression of some aspect of life. It has universal appeal and affords the widest latitude for selecting material. Themes such as "Love Is Everywhere," "Humans Are Only People," or "Wishes We All Share" are broad enough to include almost any story, play, or poem yet focused enough to provide a framework for an imaginative, fluid program.

Sometimes a title of one of the selections within the program may serve as its theme. "How to Be a Hero," the title of a picture storybook by Harvey Weiss, was used as the theme of a Hofstra University production. In the same way Eve Merriam's "Inside a Poem" lends itself as an interesting theme for a poetry program.

Scripts that tell a story about a figure from the past or a period of history have a narrower focus and naturally require stricter research. Finding material about Abraham Lincoln or the Civil War will not be as easy as compiling material around a general theme, but there is much literature to be found on popular historical figures, and with creative handling of the selections and transitions the total effect can provide insights into a man and the times in which he lived. The same results can be had with other more specific themes such as "Folk Tales around the World," "Science and the Future," "Robert Louis Stevenson: His Poems."

To create a mood often nothing more is needed than a one-word theme such as "Happiness," "Nature," "Romance," "Spooks." This type of theme is a beginning to be thought about and built on in any imaginative way.

Sometimes we may find it expedient to select the material for the program first and develop a theme afterwards. Having a subject in mind in advance may be too restrictive especially when we are selecting literature to suit a particular reading level. It is not unusual to collect a kaleidoscope of five or six pieces and then find a common denominator which will serve as a theme.

Adapting Materials for Readers Theatre

After selecting appropriate material around a theme, the next step is adapting the literature. While a similar procedure is used to transpose nearly all types of material, the specific application will differ depending on the kind of literature.[1] In short stories some of the narrative paragraphs may need to be converted into dia-

logue. Many visual elements in plays must be translated into spoken lines. Poems, usually left unaltered, still must be scripted for the most dramatic effect.

Prose

Most short stories are written to be read silently, but by determining who will speak the various lines and by cutting and rewriting some of the material, it is possible to reshape a selection into dramatic form. Let us look at Aesop's fable, "The Travelers and the Purse," followed by its adaptation. In this example the adapted version adheres to the text exactly as the author wrote it. Two storytellers share the narrative lines while the dialogue is spoken by the travelers.

The Travelers and the Purse
By Aesop

Two men were traveling together along a road. Suddenly one of them stooped and picked up a purse. Someone had lost it on the way.

"Look what I have found!" he cried. "It is very heavy. It must be full of money."

Quickly he opened it. "How lucky I am!" he said when he saw that it was full of gold.

"You should say how lucky *we* are," his companion said. "Aren't we traveling together? Travelers should share both their good luck and their bad."

"No, indeed!" the other said. "*I* found it and *I* am going to keep it!"

He had no sooner said this than they heard a cry of "Stop, thief!" They looked behind them. A mob of people was streaming toward them. And everyone in that mob was armed with a heavy stick.

The traveler who had picked up the purse grew pale with fright.

"We are lost if they find the purse upon us!" he cried. "They will think we stole it!"

But his companion did not share his fright. "Don't say *we* are lost," he said. "You would not say *we* before. So now say *I* am lost."

If you do not share your good fortune with others, don't expect them to share in your misfortunes.[2]

Adaptation of "The Travelers and the Purse"

Storyteller I: Two men were traveling together along a road. Suddenly one of them stopped and picked up a purse. Someone had lost it on the way.

Traveler I: "Look what I have found!" he cried. "It is very heavy. It must be full of money."

Storyteller II: Quickly he opened it.

Traveler I: "How lucky I am!" he said when he saw that it was full of money.

Traveler II: "You should say how lucky *we* are," his companion said. "Aren't we traveling together? Travelers should share both their good luck and their bad."

Traveler I: "No, indeed!" the other said. "I found it and I am going to keep it!"

Storyteller I: He had no sooner said this than they heard a cry of

Storyteller II: "Stop thief!"

Storyteller I: They looked behind them. A mob of people was streaming toward them. And everyone in that mob was armed with a heavy stick.

Storyteller II: The traveler who had picked up the purse grew pale with fright.

Traveler I: "We are lost if they find the purse upon us!" he cried. "They will think we stole it."

Storyteller I: But his companion did not share his fright.

Traveler II: "Don't say *we* are lost," he said. "You would not say *we* before. So now say *I* am lost."

Storyteller II: If you do not share your good fortune with others, don't expect them to share in your misfortunes.

In a story with a limited number of characters or where characters are discussed in the narration but have no dialogue, they can be brought to life by writing them into the script. Adapting prose into play form becomes a highly creative writing experience when students add updated, humorous lines to the dramatization or rewrite long narrative passages to hold the interest of the audience. If we were to adapt Hans Christian Andersen's "The Princess and the Pea," as we did the Aesop, without changing the original, the reading would be dull and lifeless. Instead, the adaptation keeps the story-line intact, but dialogue and other material is developed for characters otherwise entombed in the narrative passages of the text. Notice, too, how sound effects and choral readings may be included to punctuate certain occurrences:

The Princess and the Pea
By Hans Christian Andersen

Once upon a time there was a prince who wanted to marry a princess, but she would have to be a real one. He traveled around the whole world looking for her; but every time he met a princess there was always something amiss. There were plenty of princesses but not one of them was quite to his taste. Something was always the matter: they just weren't real princesses. So he returned home very sad and sorry, for he had set his heart on marrying a real princess.

One evening a storm broke over the kingdom. The lightning flashed, the thunder roared, and the rain came down in bucketfuls. In the midst of this horrible storm, someone knocked on the city gate; and the king himself went down to open it.

On the other side of the gate stood a princess. But goodness, how wet she was! Water ran down her hair and her clothes in streams. It flowed in through the heels of her shoes and out through her toes. But she said that she was a real princess.

"We'll find that out quickly enough," thought the old queen, but she didn't say a word out loud. She hurried to the guest room and took all the bedclothes off the bed; then on the bare bedstead she put a pea. On top of the pea she put twenty mattresses; and on top of the mattresses, twenty eiderdown quilts. That was the bed on which the princess had to sleep.

In the morning, when someone asked her how she had slept, she replied, "Oh, just wretchedly! I didn't close my eyes once, the whole night through. God knows what was in that bed; but it was something hard, and I am black and blue all over."

Now they knew that she was a real princess, since she had felt the pea that was lying on the bedstead through twenty mattresses and twenty eiderdown quilts. Only a real princess could be so sensitive!

The prince married her. The pea was exhibited in the royal museum; and you can go there and see it, if it hasn't been stolen.

Now that was a real story![3]

Adaptation of "The Princess and the Pea"

Sound Person: (*Xylophone: three chimes.*)

Storyteller I: There was once a prince and he wanted a princess.

All: But then she must be a real princess.

Storyteller II: He traveled right round the world to find one, but there was

always something wrong. There were plenty of princesses, but whether they were real princesses he had great difficulty in discovering.

Prince: There was always something which was not quite right about them.

Storyteller I: So at last he had to come home again, and he was very sad . . .

Prince: I am very sad.

Storyteller II: . . . because he wanted a real princess so badly.

Prince: Do I want a princess!

Storyteller I: One evening there was a terrible storm.

Sound Person: (*Cymbal clash.*)

Storyteller II: It thundered and lightninged and the rain poured down in torrents.

All: In torrents!

Storyteller I: Indeed it was a fearful night.

Storyteller II: In the middle of the storm somebody knocked at the town gate.

Sound Person: (*Hollow block knocking.*)

Storyteller I: The king himself went to open it.

King: Who goes there?

Storyteller II: . . . shouted the king.

Storyteller I: It was a princess who stood outside.

Princess: Yes, I am a princess but I'm in a terrible state from the rain and the storm.

Storyteller II: The water streamed out of her hair and her clothes; it ran in at the top of her shoes and out at the heel.

Princess: Wow, do I look a wreck! But believe me I am a real princess.

Queen: Well, we shall soon see if that is true.

Storyteller I: . . . thought the old queen, but she said nothing.

Storyteller II: Then the queen went into the bedroom and did a very strange thing.

All: What was that?

Storyteller I: She took all the bedclothes off the bed and then . . .

All: And then?

Storyteller II: She laid a pea on the bedstead.

All: A pea?

Queen: Yes, I laid an eensy, beensy, little pea on the bedstead.

Sound Person: (*Triangle: bing.*)

Storyteller I: And then she took twenty mattresses.

All: Twenty?

Storyteller II: And twenty feather beds.

All: Twenty?

Storyteller I: Indeed! and piled them all on top of the little pea.

Queen: This is where you are to sleep tonight my dear.

Storyteller II: Said the suspicious queen.

Princess: That sure looks comfy after a night in the storm. Well, goodnight all.

Storyteller I: Said the princess, and went to bed.

Sound Person: (*Triangle: seven bells.*)

Storyteller II: In the morning everyone asked:

All: How did you sleep, Princess?

Princess: Oh terribly badly. I have hardly closed my eyes the whole night! Heaven knows what was in the bed. I seemed to be lying upon some hard thing, and my whole body is black and blue this morning. It is terrible.

All: Well!—Well!—Well!

Storyteller I: They saw at once that she must be a real princess when she felt the pea through twenty mattresses . . .

King & Queen: And twenty feather beds!

Prince: Nobody but a real princess could have such delicate skin. I have found a *real* princess.

Storyteller II: So the prince asked her to be his wife.

Prince: Will you be my wife?

Princess: Sure, Prince, after I get a good night's sleep.

Storyteller I: And they lived happily ever after.

Storyteller II: Oh, and about the pea. It was put into the Museum where it may still be seen.

Storyteller I: If no one has stolen it.

All: Now this is a true story.

Sound Person: (*Xylophone: three chimes.*)

As we can see, there are many ways of handling narration. Any number of "storytellers" may be employed to deliver the narrative portions of the story, or the characters may tell about themselves as well as speak their dialogue lines. It is the use of narrative description that separates Readers Theatre from the usual stage production.

Poetry

Since the poet chooses words for their precise shades of meaning, it is unnecessary for us to change them. If we must cut material because of time limitations, remove an entire stanza or verse rather than tamper with the words. Of course, a poem's form will change when scripted for Readers Theatre according to who says what.

A poem that tells a story through dialogue can be treated much the same way as a short story. In "The Turtle and the Rabbit" lines are assigned in the obvious manner—Turtle and Rabbit speak their dialogue. Storyteller narrates. Following is the original poem and its adaptation:

The Turtle and the Rabbit
By La Fontaine

No matter how you run, you can't make up lost time.
The rabbit and the turtle prove it in this rhyme.
"I'll bet," said the Turtle, "you can't get from here to there

As fast as I can." Rabbit laughed. "You, race? You'd dare?
Do you need a doctor?"
The ribald rabbit sat and mocked her:
"Poor thing, I think you've lost your wits!"
"Well," said Turtle, "I won't call quits,
At least until we've raced."
And so their bets were made and placed.
(What they bet, and who refereed,
Are more details than we shall need.)
Long-legged Rabbit could have reached the goal-line tree
In nothing flat, but, stretching on the summer grass,
He thought, "I'll rest awhile, and watch the cloud-shapes pass.
Let Turtle plod. I'm invincible.
Just see her solemn, pompous tread—

She's like our old school principal!"
While steady Turtle forged ahead,
Rabbit dreamed he saw himself, daring and glorious,
Handicapped, but victorious,
Too proud to stoop to compete.
He beamed and lay at ease. His dreams were as heady
As if he'd conquered already.
Then, when Rabbit saw Turtle had the goal in sight,
He sprang, he leaped, he bounded, dashed as fleet as fleet,
In vain. Despite his long, strong legs and all their might,
Turtle won. "See" she cried, "what good are speedy feet?
A prompt start and a prompt heart mean more than feet do."
She added, with a little sniff,
"What would have happened, Rabbit, if
You'd had your house to carry, too?"[4]

Adaptation of "The Turtle and the Rabbit"

Storyteller: No matter how you run, you can't make up lost time. The rabbit and the turtle prove it in this rhyme.

Turtle: I'll bet,

Storyteller: Said Turtle,

Turtle: You can't get from here to there
As fast as I can.

Storyteller: Rabbit laughed.

Rabbit: You, race? You'd dare?
Do you need a doctor?

Storyteller: The ribald rabbit sat and mocked her:

Rabbit: Poor thing, I think you've lost your wits!

Turtle: Well,

Storyteller: Said Turtle,

Turtle: I won't call quits,
At least until we've raced.

Storyteller: And so their bets were made and placed
(What they bet, and who refereed,
Are more details than we shall need.)
Long-legged Rabbit could have reached the goal-line tree
In nothing flat, but stretching on the summer grass,
He thought,

Rabbit: I'll rest awhile, and watch the cloud-shapes pass.
Let Turtle plod. I'm invincible.
Just see her solemn, pompous tread—
She's like our old school principal!

Storyteller: While steady Turtle forged ahead,
Rabbit dreamed he saw himself, daring and glorious,
Handicapped, but victorious,
Too proud to stoop to compete.
He beamed and lay at ease. His dreams were as heady
As if he'd conquered already.
Then when Rabbit saw Turtle had the goal in sight,
He sprang, he leaped, he bounded, dashed as fleet as fleet,
In vain. Despite his long, strong legs and all their might,
Turtle won.

Turtle: See,

Storyteller: She cried,

Turtle: What good are speedy feet?
A prompt start and a prompt heart mean more than feet do.

Storyteller: She added, with a little sniff,

Turtle: What would have happened, Rabbit, if
You'd had your house to carry, too?

Another way to script La Fontaine's poem is to have the characters share the narration with the Storyteller:

Turtle: "I'll bet," said Turtle, "you can't get from here to there as fast as I can."

Rabbit: Rabbit laughed. "You'd race? You'd dare? Do you need a doctor?"

Storyteller: The ribald rabbit sat and mocked her:

Poetry without dialogue requires special handling. The best procedure to follow for creating a script with this kind of material is to add characterization. Asking the question, Who could be saying these words and to whom? makes it easy to visualize a character speaking. In "Somebody Said That It Couldn't Be Done" it is possible to invent two characters—a Reporter and a Doer:

Somebody Said That It Couldn't Be Done
Anonymous

Somebody said that it couldn't be done—
But he, with a grin, replied
He'd never be one to say it couldn't be done—
Leastways, not 'til he'd tried.
So he buckled right in, with a trace of a grin;
By golly, he went right to it.
He tackled The Thing That Couldn't Be Done!
And he couldn't do it.[5]

Adaptation of "Somebody Said That It Couldn't Be Done"

Reporter: Somebody said that it couldn't be done—
But he, with a grin replied.

Doer: He'd never be one to say it couldn't be done—
Leastways not 'til he tried.

Reporter: So he buckled right in, with a trace of a grin;

Doer: By golly, he went right to it.

Reporter: He tackled The Thing That Couldn't Be Done.

Doer: And he couldn't do it.

In "Diamond Cut Diamond" a She Cat, He Cat, Tree, and Poet can be imagined:

Diamond Cut Diamond
By Ewart Milne

Two cats
One up a tree
One under a tree
The cat up a tree is he
The cat under the tree is she.
The tree is witch elm, just incidentally.
He takes no notice of she, she takes no notice of he.
He stares at the wooly clouds passing, she stares at the tree.
There's been a lot written about cats, by Old Possum, Yeats and Company
But not Alfred de Musset or Lord Tennyson or Poe or anybody
Wrote about one cat under, and one cat up, a tree.
God knows why this should be left for me
Except I like cats as cats be
Especially one cat up
And one cat under
A witch elm
Tree.[6]

Adaptation of "Diamond Cut Diamond"

Two Cats: Two cats

He Cat: One up a tree

She Cat: One under the tree

He Cat: The cat up a tree is he

She Cat: The cat under the tree is she.

Tree: The tree is witch elm, just incidentally.

He Cat: He takes no notice of she,

She Cat: She takes no notice of he.

He Cat: He stares at the wooly clouds passing,

She Cat: She stares at the tree.

Poet: There's been a lot written about cats, by Old Possum, Yeats & Company
But not Alfred de Musset, or Lord Tennyson, or Poe, or anybody

She Cat: Wrote about one cat under

He Cat: And one cat up

Tree: A tree.

Poet: God knows why this should be left for me
Except I like cats as cats be

He Cat: Especially one cat up

She Cat: And one cat under

Tree: A witch elm tree.

Where there is only one character speaking such as in the poem "Mother to Son," not only can lines be assigned to Mother, but Shadows or several sides of the mother may be represented:

Mother to Son
By Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So, boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.[7]

Adaptation of "Mother to Son"

Mother: Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Shadow I: It's had tacks in it,

Shadow II: And splinters,

Shadow III: And boards torn up,

Shadow IV: And places with no carpet on the floor—

All: Bare.

Mother: But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,

Shadow I: And reachin' landin's,

Shadow II: And turnin' corners,

Shadow III: And sometimes goin' in the dark

Shadow IV: Where there ain't been no light.

Mother: So, boy, don't you turn back.

Shadow I: Don't you set down on the steps
Cause you find it kinder hard.

All: Don't you fall now—

Mother: For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin'
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Some poetry is well suited to group speaking. Many interesting vocal effects can be achieved by utilizing choral reading or verse choirs. Arbuthnot compares this kind of chorus to a singing choir requiring tonal grouping of like voices—high, medium, and low.[8] Coupling choral speaking with individual reading creates a script with great dramatic appeal. Eve Merriam's "Inside a Poem" illustrates this very well:

Inside a Poem

It doesn't always have to rhyme,
but there's the repeat of a beat, somewhere
an inner chime that makes you want to
tap your feet or swerve in a curve;
a lilt, a leap, a lightning-split:—
thunderstruck the consonants jut,
while the vowels open wide as waves in the noon-blue sea.

You hear with your heels, your eyes feel
what they have never touched before:
fins on a bird, feathers on a deer;
taste all colors, inhale
memory and tomorrow and always the tang is today.[9]

Adaptation of "Inside a Poem"

Chorus I: (Low Voices.) It doesn't always have to rhyme,
but there's the repeat of a beat,

Chorus II: (*High Voices.*) somewhere
an inner chime that makes you want to
tap your feet or swerve in a curve

Person I: a lilt,

Person II: a leap,

Person III: a lightning-split:—

Chorus I: thunderstruck the consonants jut,

Chorus II: while the vowels open wide as waves in the noon-blue sea.

Person I: You hear with your heels.

Person II: your eyes feel
what they never touched before:

Person III: fins on a bird, feathers on a deer;

Chorus I & II: taste all colors,

Person I: inhale
memory and tomorrow

Person II: and always the tang is

All: today.

Plays

Plays selected for Readers Theatre presentation should be good stories which do not rest too heavily on overt, physical action. The play is often easier to adapt than other forms of literature because it is already written in dramatic form for oral delivery.

Even if the play constitutes the complete Readers Theatre program, it will no doubt need cutting and rewriting to keep it within acceptable time limits. If only portions of the play are to be used, a narrator will be needed to provide the necessary transitions from one segment to another. The characters, too, may be given additional lines to help bridge the cut portions. The important idea to remember is that we need not be tied to the original act and scene divisions nor be put off by the length of the play. Skipping around, using dialogue from here and there, condensing portions of the play, can be a highly creative activity by which children develop an awareness of the dramatic form.

In the following scene from *The Fantasticks* the character of El Gallo is a built-in narrator who easily supplies the needed transitions while other characters with rewritten lines provide additional missing links so that the plot is kept intact and the new sequence becomes an understandable, fluid whole!

The Fantasticks[10]

By Harvey Schmidt and Tom Jones

Luisa: The moon turns red on my birthday every year and it always will until somebody saves me and takes me back to my palace.

El Gallo: That is a typical remark.
The other symptoms vary.
She thinks that she's a princess;
That her name must be in French,
Or sometimes Eurasian,
Although she isn't sure what that is.

. . . . . .

El Gallo: Good.
And now the boy,
His story may be a wee bit briefer,
Because it's pretty much the same.

Matt: There is this girl.

El Gallo: That is the essence.

Matt: There is this girl.

El Gallo: I warn you: it may be monotonous.

Matt: There is this girl.
I'm nearly twenty years old.
I've studied biology,
I've had an education.
I've been inside a lab:
Dissected violets.
I know the way things are.
I'm grown-up; stable;
Willing to conform.
I'm beyond such foolish notions,
And yet—in spite of my knowledge—
There is this girl.

. . . . . .

Bell: I'm her father. And believe me, it isn't easy. Perhaps that's why I love vegetables. So dependable. You plant a radish, and you know what you're about. You don't get a turnip or a cabbage, no. Plant a turnip, get a turnip; plant a cabbage, get a cabbage. While with children—I thought I had planted a turnip or at worst perhaps an avocado; something remotely useful. I'm a merchant—I sell buttons. What need do I have for a rose?—There she is. Missy, you must go inside.

. . . . . .

Bell: Hucklebee!

Huck: Bellomy!

Bell: Neighbor!
Huck: Friend!
Bell: How's the gout?
Huck: I barely notice. And your asthma?
Bell: A trifle. (*Coughs.*) I endure it.
Huck: Well, it's nearly settled.
Bell: What is?
Huck: The marriage. They're nearly ready. I hid in the bushes to listen. Oh, it's something; they're out of their minds with love!
Bell: Hurray.
Huck: My son—he is fantastic!
Bell: My daughter is fantastic, too.
They're both of them mad.
Huck: They are geese!
Bell: It was a clever plan we had
To build this wall.
Huck: Yes. And to pretend to feud.
Bell: Just think if they knew
That we wanted them wed.
Huck: A pre-arranged marriage—
Bell: They'd rather be dead!
(*Music.*)
Huck: Children!
Bell: Lovers!
Huck: Fantasticks!
Bell: Geese!
Huck: How clever we are.
Bell: How crafty to know.
Huck: To manipulate children,
Bell: You merely say "no."

Adaptation of *The Fantasticks*

El Gallo: Let me tell you a few things you may want to know before we begin the play. First of all the characters. A boy, a girl, two fathers and a wall which separates their properties. You see, the boy and the girl are neighbors.

Luisa: I am the girl and the moon turns red on my birthday every year.

El Gallo: That is a typical remark. The other symptoms vary. She thinks she's a princess. That her name must be in French. Or sometimes Eurasian. Although she isn't sure what that is. In short, she's in love. Then there's the boy.

Matt: I am the boy—and I live next door. I've studied biology. I've had an education. I know the way things are. I'm beyond foolish notions. And yet—there is this girl . . .

El Gallo: You see, he's in love too. Now the fathers.

Bell: I'm *her* father. And believe me it isn't easy. Perhaps that's why I love vegetables. So dependable. You plant a radish, and you know what you're about. You don't get a turnip or a cabbage, no. Plant a turnip, get a turnip; plant a cabbage, get a cabbage. While with children . . .

Huck: Hi, Bellomy. Oh, I'm *his* father. My son is fantastic.

Bell: My daughter is fantastic, too!

Huck: They love one another.

Huck & Bell: And that's fantastic with us.

El Gallo: Well, maybe you don't see the problem yet. Everyone seems to be happy with the situation as it is, but listen . . .

Bell: Just think if they knew
That we wanted them to wed.

Huck: A pre-arranged marriage
They'd rather be dead.

El Gallo: So there you have it.
Neither the girl nor the boy
Must ever know their parents approve.

Bell: It was a clever plan we had
To build this wall.

Huck: Yes, and *pretend* to feud.

Bell: Just think if they knew
That we wanted them to wed.

Huck: A pre-arranged marriage.

Bell: They'd rather be dead.

Huck: Children.

Bell: Lovers.

El Gallo: Fantasticks.

Huck: How clever we are.

Bell: How crafty to know.

Huck: To manipulate children,

Bell: You merely say "no."

Introductions, Transitions, Conclusions

Once the theme has been decided upon and the material collected and adapted, the selections for a compiled script must be knit together to form an intelligible unit with a clear beginning, middle, and ending. This is best accomplished by utilizing an introduction, transitions, and a conclusion, all of which help to adjust listeners' expectations and enhance enjoyment of the literature.

An introduction should get the presentation under way. This can take several forms. The theme and program outline can be presented by a narrator:

Narrator: It came to our attention that not too many people like poems. They think poems are boring and sometimes they don't understand what they're all about. You are not these people, of course, but did you ever really go inside a poem where the words are?

Today our Readers Theatre will take you on a journey through four very different kinds of poems—one tells an exciting story; one is about nature; one is funny, rather ridiculous, in fact; and our title poem, by Eve Merriam, is all about poetry itself. Listen to *it* first—and then again at the end—come with us "Inside a Poem."

In another form of introduction characters may open a program in dialogue which reveals the theme and gives a hint as to what is to come:

Character I: I hate school.

Character II: Me too, especially English.

Character III: Poems . . . yuch!!!!

Poem: Sticks and stones may break my bones
But names will never harm me!

All: Who are you?

Poem: I am a poem without a doubt
You three guys are missing out.

Character I: You're a poem?

Character II: What do you mean we're missing out?

Poem: I said I'm a poem, a poet's creation
I'm read and recited with due admiration
I'm a riddle in rhyme, a story in verse
As a ballad I'm long, as a limerick I'm terse
Give me a chance to show you my art
Inside a poem where words have a heart.

A sudden switch from one selection to another within a program can be confusing. Listeners need time to reflect on what they have heard and to get set for the next reading. A transition delivered by the narrator or, as above, by the characters provides this bridge and also further develops the theme. For example, transitional narration from "How to Be a Hero":

Narrator: Heroes don't win all the time. Sometimes they lose all the time. Observe our hero, Charlie Brown, in "The Baseball Game."

Occasionally the transitions are themselves short readings which provide a lead-in to the next selection. In a Readers Theater production at an elementary school, a group of letters received from several classes in the school describing what they liked most at home served as the framework for the program. One or two letters were read by the performers before each piece:

Performer: Dear Room 101
If you want to know what I like best at home, it's when my dad cooks the meals. Then we really get to eat weird things!

Your school mate,
Alfred Brandt

This letter was a natural introduction to John Ciardi's "When Mommy Slept Late, Daddy Cooked Breakfast."

One goal of Readers Theatre is to create a cohesive whole, not to leave the audience feeling that several people stood and read literary selections. A written conclusion which rounds out the theme and moves the listeners to a further reflection on what they heard will help to unify the presentation especially when the program consists of a collage of material. In addition, a conclusion pinpoints the exact ending so that youngsters need not be uncertain as to whether or not the production is over.

Just as the introduction and the transitions should be kept simple and brief, so the conclusion is best when it is short and to the point. There is no need to go into long restatements of the readings. The major purpose of the program, after all, is to present the literature and in most cases it speaks for itself.

> *Narrator:* A poet once said: "Words are how what you think inside comes out." We hope our program let you in on what some poets were thinking about. Now that you've heard us you can see that poetry can be interesting and even fun, especially when you dig deep and go inside a poem where the words are.

The selection preceding the conclusion, the last on the program, should also help to close the presentation. Although it can be the climax, or the high point, a final piece should sound a serious, quiet note, guiding the listener out of the interpretative situation as naturally as he or she was eased into it. The introduction in the example above indicates that "Inside a Poem" by Eve Merriam will be read as a finale as well as an opener. Since children delight in the familiar, what better way to end a program than with a repeat of a short selection that went before.

Finally, a conclusion is a good place to include ideas for follow-up activities:

> *Narrator:* If you liked our presentation about poetry, we would like to invite you to write a poem. Any kind will do. Send your selections to our classroom and we'll create a new Readers Theater using many of them. Goodbye, and have fun inside your poems.

Notes

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4. Marie Ponsot, trans., *Fables of La Fontaine* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1957), pp. 20-21.
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8. May Hill Arbuthnot, comp., *The Arbuthnot Antholcgy of Children's Literature*, 3rd ed. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1971), p. 1119.
9. Eve Merriam, *It Doesn't Always Have to Rhyme* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1964), p. 3.
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CLASSROOM PROCEDURES AND PRODUCTION AIDS

Readers Theatre allows pupils to have a major hand in forming their own drama from start to finish. Unlike the conventional school play where children are handed scripts, here children select their own material, adapt it for presentation in the class, and become the readers who portray the characters in the literature. Imaginative classroom procedures toward such a goal inspire even the most reluctant learners to participate. With little extra effort, it is then possible to create a Readers Theatre production worthy of a larger audience.

Classroom Procedures

The most satisfying way to arrive at the concept of presenting some kind of dramatic program is to allow it to flow naturally from a unit of study, a trip taken, a report given, or any other shared class activity. Suggesting the Readers Theatre format as a means of illuminating that experience is a logical next step.

The process of introducing the technique will vary with the abilities and backgrounds of our pupils. Following are suggestions for classroom activities designed to activate interest in Readers Theatre and to develop an understanding of adapting and staging literary material.

Getting Started

Asking children to relate some of their play-going and performing experiences provides a springboard for learning about Readers Theatre. Hold a class discussion about the theatre:

Teacher: All of us have seen a play or even performed in one at one time or another. Can you tell me what a play is?

Pupil: A play is a story with characters that takes place on a stage.

Pupil: A play has actors in it who pretend to be the characters.

Teacher: How do they do this?

Pupil: They wear costumes.

Pupil: They memorize their lines.

Pupil: They talk to each other like they are thinking up their words at that very moment, but they're not.

Teacher: Yes, the actors make the story appear to be real life. What else in a play makes it seem real?

Pupil: There is scenery which looks like the place where the characters are supposed to be.

Pupil: There is furniture or other things around that people use in real life.

Teacher: What about the audience? Where are they?

Pupil: They are sitting in their seats in the dark.

Teacher: Do the actors know they are there?

Pupil: They know they are there but they pretend they aren't.

Pupil: There are lights on the stage and not in the audience so the actors really can't see the audience.

Teacher: Very good. A play is one kind of theatre event. But most people think of the theatre as a specially designed building with a raised stage and lights and scenery and costumes. There is another kind of theatre event which can take place almost anywhere, even in front of a classroom. Can anyone think of it? It is something like a play we can do in the classroom.

Pupil: Act out stories.

Teacher: Yes, by reading aloud in a dramatic style, we can turn a story into a theatre event. This kind of theatre is called Readers Theatre. Readers Theatre is something like a play because the readers portray the characters in the story, but like story telling much of the action, the scenery, and the costumes has to be imagined by the audience. For this reason, Readers Theatre is often called theatre of the imagination.

A Sample to See and Read

For Readers Theatre activity to be meaningful to young students it is important that they see and read a sample dramatization. Toward this end let us adapt a short story into Readers Theatre form. We can begin with one of the stories in chapter 3. After reading the story together, try the adapted version in round-robin reading from seats. Discuss the story and the script:

Teacher: What makes the adapted version different from the story?

Pupil: One is like a play, the other is a plain story.

Teacher: Yes, the dramatized version is like a play, but it is also a form of story telling. Can you tell me what story qualities are preserved in the script?

Pupil: There are descriptions of people and the things they do like in the story.

Teacher: That's right. Such passages are called "narrative" paragraphs. Who reads these narratives in the script?

Pupil: The narrator.

Teacher: Good. What other differences between the script and the story do we see?

Pupil: The characters seem more real in the script than in the story.

Teacher: Yes, by speaking his lines, a reader brings the character to life. Can anyone tell me what these lines are called?

Pupil: Dialogue.

Plan for an Adaptation

Now it is time to plan to adapt a story together with the class. This story will serve

as a model for the children who, with guidance, will adapt it, rehearse it, and present it to each other.

Select a story. Perhaps the children can help choose one from their readers or from the library. A very short, easy-to-read story is best for now. As an example we can use Aesop's "The Wind and the Sun." Read the story to the class as they follow along. Hold a discussion (something which should take place before every adaptation):

Teacher: What is the story about?

Pupil: The north wind and the sun are fighting to find out which is the stronger.

Pupil: They have a contest to see who can make the traveler take off his coat.

Pupil: The wind blows and blows but the man hugs his coat tighter to him. The sun shines very hot. The traveler takes off his coat.

Teacher: What is the main idea—the theme of the story?

Pupil: You can get more by being warm and friendly than by being forceful.

Teacher: Good. Where does the story take place?

Pupil: In the sky and on a road almost anywhere.

Teacher: When does it take place?

Pupil: Any day.

Teacher: Who are the characters?

Pupil: The north wind, the sun, and the traveler.

Teacher: What are the characters like?

Pupil: The north wind is boastful. A big blow hard.

Pupil: The sun is warm, kind and loving.

Pupil: The traveler is an ordinary man on his way.

Adapt the Story

Tape large poster paper to the chalkboard on which to record the adaptation. List the title of the original work, the time it takes place, the setting, and the characters on the poster. Discuss the adaptation.

Teacher: How shall we turn the story into a script?

Pupil: Let us give the dialogue lines to the characters who speak them in the original story.

Teacher: Give us an example. What will the sun say?

Pupil: The sun says: "I see a way we can settle our dispute."

Teacher: Who shall read the narrative or descriptive passages?

Pupil: We can have a storyteller or a narrator read those lines. He can start the story off by saying, "The wind and the sun were disputing *which* was the stronger."

Teacher: As you can see, there is a great deal of narrative.

Pupil: We can have two narrators.

Pupil: We can cut some of the narration out.

Teacher: Can we change some of the descriptive passages to dialogue lines?

Pupil: Sure. Instead of having the narrator say the two were arguing, we can have them argue.

Pupil: Yes, let's make up lines for the characters, so there will be less long stuff for the narrator.

Teacher: Good. But can we take another approach? Can we give each character some dialogue and also allow each character to narrate the events and describe the scenes that they experience?

Pupil: No, people don't really talk that way.

Teacher: But remember, Readers Theatre is story telling too.

Pupil: But how can we speak *about* a character and still *be* that character at the same time?

Teacher: Let us try it.

Pupil: Okay, the sun says: "So the sun went behind a cloud to watch."

Pupil: Then the north wind can say, "And the wind began to blow as hard as he could upon the traveler."

Pupil: That sounds good.

Write the name of the characters including the narrator in bold letters in the margin of the poster script. As decisions are made as to who says what, write the lines assigned to each character next to the name.

Encourage the children to update their piece. Suggest adding humor through exaggeration and repetition of phrases. Even the use of a slang expression in an unlikely place adds to the fun of writing and performing.

Teacher: Do you think we can add a funny line or two to the fable? It is rather short and humorless.

Pupil: The traveler has no dialogue. Can we give him a funny line to say?

Teacher: That's a good idea.

Pupil: When the wind blows him he can say, "Martha was right, I should have worn my long underwear."

Pupil: And when the sun shines on him, he can say, "Come on man, cool it, cool it!"

Teacher: Good thinking! If we want to, we can make the story a little longer by adding more characters to it. Can anyone think of other characters we can put into the script?

Pupil: We can put in some animals and flowers along the road.

Work through the entire story in this fashion helping all the children to participate in the writing until the script is complete. Mimeograph it for the performance.

Talking Theatrical Production

In the course of preparing a Readers Theatre production the pupils will become familiar with some of the vocabulary of the theatre. Consistent use of theatrical terms will add a dimension of "theatre reality" to the whole project. Many of the following terms are indispensable for developing a Readers Theatre production:

Act: To read the role of a character in the script

Adaptation: A story rewritten into play form

Ad lib: Lines not appearing in the script invented by the readers

Blocking: Determining the positions of readers within a scene on stage

Business: Bits of action performed by the readers

Casting: Selecting readers for their parts

Center stage: The middle area of the stage

Characterization: The reader's interpretation of a character

Counter: To shift position on stage for a balanced stage picture

Cross: To go from one stage area to another

Cue: A verbal or nonverbal signal to say or do something

Dialogue: Conversation between characters on stage

Director: The person who supervises the entire production

Downstage: The area of the stage closest to the audience

Entrance: An indication of a reader's arrival on stage

Exit: An indication of a reader's leaving the stage

Freeze: To remain in a fixed position without moving

Left stage: The position of the stage on the reader's left as he or she faces the audience

Offstage focus: To look up at a fixed spot out in the audience when reading

Onstage focus: To look up at the other characters when reading

Pantomime: Suggesting a story or an idea through bodily movements only

Plot: The story line of a script

Properties (props): Objects or items needed in the performance

Rehearsal: Practice sessions to perfect the performance

Right stage: The portion of the stage on the reader's right as he or she faces the audience

Script: The book containing lines the players read

Scene: A single situation or unit of the script

Upstage: The area of the stage furthest from the audience

U R (Upstage Right)	U C (Upstage Center)	U L (Upstage Left)
R C (Right Center)	C (Center)	L C (Left Center)
D R (Downstage Right)	D C (Downstage (Center)	D L (Downstage Left)

Figure 1. Nine acting areas of a stage.

Areas of the Stage

Rehearsals are made more professional if pupils become familiar with the nine acting areas of a stage. These demarcations apply wherever a performance takes place. Fortunately, any designated area, the front of a classroom, the center of a library, the end of a lunchroom or gymnasium, as well as the auditorium stage can be a performance area for Readers Theatre.

Have the children divide the area to be the stage into nine equal parts; they can use colored chalk or washable paint. Stand in the center space.

> Teacher: What name can we give to this area of the stage?
>
> Pupil: Middle?
>
> Teacher: It is the middle but we use another word meaning middle.
>
> Pupil: Center?
>
> Teacher: Yes, this part of the stage is called "Center Stage." Will you mark a big "C" in this box.

Face the class, hold out your right arm.

> Teacher: Which arm am I holding out?
>
> Pupil: The right.
>
> Teacher: Correct. Then the square at the right of center is called "Right Center." Will you mark "RC" in that square.

Follow the same procedure to locate "Left Center."

> Teacher: Notice that when we refer to "right" and "left" we are always referring to the actor's right and left.
>
> Pupil: But the people in the audience are facing the other way. They may get mixed up.
>
> Teacher: No, because the audience does not use the stage. They do not have to take stage directions.

Before naming the remaining areas, explain that years ago stages were higher in the back so audiences could see better. Thus the square in front of center is called "Down Center." Using the same method as before, describe and mark the other locations.

Engage the students in a game with the stage locations. Ask a volunteer to follow directions. Ask another to give directions, such as, "John, move Up Left." Add other pupils until all have a chance to walk to and name the locations.[1]

Blocking the Script

Blocking is the working out of positions and actions of the readers on stage. If we block our characters imaginatively, a Readers Theatre program becomes believable. Suggestive staging allows students to be "on" or "off" without formal entrances or exits. A few indicative movements encourages the audience to envision the setting and to conceptualize incidents as they are read by the actors.

To illustrate the importance of blocking select a cast of readers for the story. Have them stand in a line on the stage area. Ask them to read all or part of the script. Afterwards:

> Teacher: When characters are on stage they create a kind of stage picture. What do you think of this stage picture?

Pupil: The readers should not stand in a straight line.

Teacher: How can we make the picture more interesting?

Pupil: The wind and the sun can stand on stools because they are supposed to be in the sky.

Pupil: The traveler can walk across the stage instead of standing in one place.

Teacher: Let us try out some of these suggestions.

Explain that planning these positions and other stage movements which add interest to a presentation is called "blocking" the performance. Often a director will prepare a blocking chart before rehearsing a script (see figure 2). This makes it easier to tell each player where to go and what to do. Of course, the blocking can be changed as the production takes shape. Even when we block as we rehearse, it is still important to record the positions decided upon. A blocking chart preserves stage directions for forthcoming sessions.

Stool X Sun		Stool X Wind
	X Traveler	
Narrator X Music Stand		

Figure 2. Blocking for Aesop's "The Wind and the Sun." As the wind and the sun try to persuade the traveler to remove his coat, each steps down from their stool and circles around the central character.

On Stage Everyone!

One great advantage of Readers Theatre is that memorization and complicated staging are unnecessary. Children can feel the thrill of performing immediately upon arriving at the front of the room.

To use all the children in the class assign several pupils to play each role. In this manner the script will have four or five casts. For the first round it is best to segregate the groups as to reading ability. Cast One should represent the best readers, Cast Two the next best, and so on until all reading levels are cast. Since each group will read in order, this system allows those with reading problems to hear their lines several times before they are called on to read aloud.

Hold a discussion about interpreting the lines of the script:

Teacher: How should the wind sound when he speaks?

Pupil: Like a big, fat Santa Claus . . . only not so happy.

Pupil: He should speak in a low, gruff voice.

Pupil: He should kind of sing his lines so that each word takes longer to say and sounds windy.

Teacher: Let us try it.

Have all the children who are to read the north wind try their different interpretations.

Teacher: What about the sun? How does she sound?

Pupil: I think the sun should giggle a lot. After all, she spreads sunshine all around, she should be happy.

Pupil: She should speak like a robot. They should both speak like robots—very choppy.

Teacher: What fun! Let's try it.

Repeat the interpretation process with those playing the sun.

Teacher: The narrator has no particular role to read. He is really a storyteller. How should he interpret his lines?

Pupil: Regular.

Teacher: Shouldn't he speak with some kind of expression? After all, he is on stage too.

Pupil: Yes, nobody likes to hear a boring person read.

Pupil: He should think about what he is reading and not just read it straight.

Teacher: Right. The narrator is a person. Try to think of him as a part of the story. Someone who is very interested in what is happening.

After all the characters have been discussed and the interpretations tried, send each cast to a different section of the room to practice reading their lines to one another. Encourage dramatic interplay by telling the children to imagine the characters talking to each other in real life. Sit with the readers having difficulty, helping them when necessary.

Send Cast One to the stage area. Position them in the scene according to the blocking plan. Have the remaining students help with the directing by offering suggestions as the rehearsals progress. Second and third groups may try different blocking patterns.

Continue the process by having each cast come up in turn to try the reading. As each group rehearses, we can suggest more details of interpretation and movement. When the lines become more familiar, encourage the readers to look up from their scripts as often as possible. Help them to decide where they should focus their eyes.

Experiment with movements which will clarify the events in the story. Remember, a suggestion of an action is enough to convey a character's intent.

Teacher: How can the traveler show he will not take his coat off and that he is being blown about by the wind?

Pupil: He can wrap his coat tightly around him and move like he's being pushed.

Teacher: Remember he is holding a script in one hand.

Pupil: He can use his free arm to sort of hug himself.

Pupil: Well, he can just pull his head into his neck.

Pupil: He can move around in place.

Teacher: What will he do when the sun broils him? The script calls for him to take his coat off.

Pupil: He can do a pantomime. Kind of pretend to swing it off with one hand.

Teacher: Will the audience know what he's doing?

Pupil: Yes, because the script tells them and if he makes the motion big enough they are sure to get it.

Pupil: Then the traveler can fan himself with his script. The audience will know he's hot.

Teacher: Let's try it.

When everyone has performed, compliment the children on a good first try and discuss the experience with the class.

Teacher: Did you have fun with Readers Theatre?

Pupil: Yes, it's really easy to put on this kind of play.

Pupil: We don't have to memorize a whole bunch of lines.

Pupil: I practically know all my lines already.

Teacher: The more you rehearse, the better the production becomes.

Pupil: I think it's hard to learn how to pretend to do the action. It would be easier just to do it.

Teacher: Yes, that takes some getting used to, but it really isn't difficult to learn to suggest an appropriate movement. Sometimes your facial expressions or the way you hold your body will enable the audience to see the action in their mind's eye.

Pupil: Can we do our story for Mrs. Murray's class?

Teacher: Of course we can, and if we add several other selections, we can compile a full-length Readers Theatre script to perform for the entire school.

Preparing a Full Length Program

Now that the class has worked together on the process of adapting and staging a story for Readers Theatre, we are ready to prepare for a full-length presentation. There are many ways to parcel out the work involved in such a production. Students who enjoy writing may be given the task of adapting the material. Others may be cast as readers, and still others may assist with the directing and staging of the production. One of the best procedures to follow, especially when working with a compiled script, is to divide the class into small workshop groups each responsible for one selection from the total presentation. In this way every student has a hand in adapting, directing, and performing a complete entity. Add to this the necessary transitional material, which we may write together with our pupils, and a complete Readers Theatre is ready for performance.

Workshop Groups

When making up workshop groups for the second round, consider the reading level of each child. Every group should now contain a healthy mix of reading abilities as well as other talents. Better readers will automatically help those who are slower since all want the project to succeed.

After deciding on a theme, the children may be asked to choose their own material or we can select the segments for each group. Whichever method is used,

the literature should meet the criteria for a successful Readers Theatre experience (see Selecting Material chapter).

Each group should be sent to a different corner of the room with its assigned selection to prepare the script. Time and materials should be available for discussing and adapting the material. The teacher should be on hand at all times for consultations with individual groups.

Those who have some difficulty reading or students who are reluctant to participate for one reason or another will be encouraged to join in the activity by working on a story already adapted. This gives them a head start on the process and develops the self confidence they need to be part of the project. When we block and rehearse our segments in separate corners of the room, sessions will be noisy. This is healthy noise, bear with it.

A final rehearsal, tying all the segments together, is best directed by the teacher and should be scheduled the day before the performance on the stage area to be used for the production.

The number of sessions allotted for work on the project and the amount of help we give the children will depend on the degree of perfection we seek for the finished production. Average preparation time for a solid performance is about ten one-hour sessions. (For a description of a model ten-hour program, see Part Two.)

Warming-Up Exercises

Voice, diction, and interpretive reading activities help children develop skills not only useful in Readers Theatre but in their daily lives as well. Warming-up sessions, including exercises in vocal projection, pronunciation, and theater techniques, introduced gradually before each rehearsal, create an atmosphere of professionalism in the classroom. Like any team getting ready for the game, students are anxious to prepare to do their best work.

When children improvise actions and practice lines from the script, they improve in speech and fluidity of movement. In addition, the following exercises can be employed to ready the readers for the performance.

Vocal Projection

We can start the discussion by speaking to the children in a soft, almost inaudible voice. Give a command, for example, which cannot be fully heard. When the children respond, explain how ineffective such a voice is. Discuss what makes an efficient voice. It is not loud, but it has sufficient volume to enable every member of an audience, no matter how large the auditorium, to hear without strain. Shouting is also ineffective since no one wants to be shouted at; this is irritating. What makes the voice heard by every member of an audience? One answer is proper breathing.

Demonstrate to the class how speech is produced on exhaled breath, not on inhaled breath. We do this by asking the class to say a word like "sure" while they are inhaling.

Ask them to say it again as they exhale. Then ask the children to hold their breath and before exhaling attempt to say a word. Take a deep breath and say the word on the exhale. When the difference is obvious to the class introduce them to several exercises which will help them to develop the skill of effective projection when reading aloud.

Exercises

1. Relaxing vocal mechanisms. Roll head completely around body. When head reaches right shoulder say "easy." Drop head back, breathe out, say "ah-h-h." When head reaches left shoulder, say "lazy." Drop head forward on chest, breathe out, say "ah." Do "easy, ah," "lazy, ah" exercises before every reading.
2. Stand up tall. Place hands flat on abdomen (under rib cage). Inhale and exhale slowly, each to the count of four. As we breathe in we feel the abdomen and lower chest expand like a balloon being filled with air. As we breathe out we notice the abdomen and chest collapsing as if the air was let out of the balloon. (There must be very little shoulder lifting and the abdomen must not be sucked in during exhalation.) Repeat the exercise two or three times being careful not to encourage dizziness by overdoing.
3. Inhale, drawing the breath in through both nose and mouth. Exhale intoning the sound "o." Hold it as long as possible with ease. Do not strain. Continue this exercise intoning all vowels.[2]
4. Inhale, drawing breath in through nose and mouth. Exhale gliding from "oo" as in moon to "e" as in me and finally to "aw" as in law. Try this exercise positioning one half of the class on either side of the room. The first group intones the call. The second group answers with the same call. Repeat several times with other sounds, being careful to maintain relaxed tones.
5. Inhale and exhale exploding the tone on "how." Repeat exploding tone on "hah," etc.[3]
6. In pairs. The characters are Alice and Grace. They hold the following conversation sitting opposite each other with knees almost touching:

   Alice: Where are you going?
   Grace: I am going to market.
   Alice: You're going to market?
   Grace. I want to buy meat.
   Alice: Please buy some for me.

   The two then move further apart and repeat the performance until finally they are at opposite ends of the room. If possible, try the exercise out of doors or in a large auditorium or lunchroom. Move pupils apart up to one hundred feet. Instruct them not to yell, but to make words heard in a clear and pleasant manner utilizing stored breath for more projection.[4]

Diction

We begin the discussion by asking the class to say the five syllable word, "articulation." Ask them to say it again and this time to try to tell us what parts of the mouth are involved in the saying of the word. We discuss the meaning of the word. Articulation means the way the sounds of a word are shaped by a person's lips, teeth, and tongue. Say the word "articulation" in an exaggerated fashion to show the children how the lips, teeth, and tongue are involved. Have the children do the same. "Ar—tic—u—la—tion." Ask pupils to isolate each sound and tell how it is made. Try other words.

Diction refers to the correctness and clearness of word pronunciation. To develop good diction we must pay attention to articulation of the words we say, making sure we shape the words properly with our teeth, lips, and tongue. Projec-

tion, too, is aided by good diction. The more power that must be used to make oneself heard, the more exact must the articulation be. (The Grace and Alice exercise above demonstrates this connection between diction and projection.)

Exercises

1. In pairs. Try to speak the following lines distinctly:
   A: I live in an ice house.
   B: I live in a nice house.
   A: I go to summer school.
   B: I think the summer's cool.
   A: I see your two eyes.
   B: I know you are too wise.
   A: It is five minutes to eight.
   B: You have five minutes to wait.
   A: Give me some ice.
   B: Give me some mice.
   A: His acts are fun.
   B: His axe is sharp.
   A: Eat Red's pies.
   B: Look out for red spies.[5]

   It takes time and thought to say each sentence correctly. Repeat this exercise changing partners.
2. Work on these pairs of words to be certain there is a difference between them:

pin–pen	kin–ken	tin–ten	him–hem
sit–set	big–beg	Min–men	Minnie–many[6]

3. Try these words. All italicized letters should be pronounced as "e" (E).

g*e*t	*a*ny	ch*e*mistry
ag*a*in	*e*ngineer	T*e*nnessee

   To practice ear training, which is important for accuracy of word pronunciation, try making wrong sounds deliberately, such as "git" for "get," "inny" for "any," "agin" for "again." Can we hear the difference?[7]
4. The following words are all said with "i" (I):

king	ring	sing	rinse
think	since	drink	milk

   Again try to make wrong sounds, such as "keng" for "king," "seng" for "sing."[8]
5. The following sentences have problem vowels and diphthongs to which there is a temptation to add other sounds. Try them.
   How now brown cow, browsing loudly in the mow?
   Sam sat in the class and waited for the man to stand.
   Ben sent a hen.
   The guide tried to get us to walk the mile-wide isle.[9]
6. Watch the problem "ng" sound at the ends of words. The careless substitution of "n" in its place is especially common in the following seven words:

nothing *not* nuthin'	coming *not* comin'
doing *not* doin'	walking *not* walkin'
fishing *not* fishin'	talking *not* talkin'
going *not* goin'[10]	

Responding on Cue

Two children are invited to the front of the room. Ask them to carry on a conversation about school. After a brief dialogue has taken place stop them and ask the class what they observed about two people talking together. Point out how one person's sentence prompted the other person to say something. For example: Pupil A: "School is boring." Pupil B: "Yeah, I think so too." Pupil B was responding to a kind of signal from Pupil A. Ask what else can be observed about two people having a conversation? Explain that when two people speak to each other they keep up a certain pace. One person generally waits until the other finishes a sentence, but does not hesitate before responding.

In the theatre, a "cue" is a signal to say or do something planned in advance. If the script calls for a character to open a window when John says the line, "Whew, I am hot!" the words, "I am hot," are the cue to open the window. Cues tell an actor when to speak or move. Usually cues are the last three words of a fellow reader's speech. Movement or facial expressions can also serve as cues and signal one to speak or move. Characters in a dramatized story must sound as much like genuine people as possible and the action must not lag. Readers who "pick up" their cues promptly without unnatural pauses create fast-paced theatre and sustain audience interest.

Exercises

Tell the class to respond to the following cues:

Teacher: "Clapping is a good exercise."
Response: (*Everyone claps.*)

Teacher: "The King is dead!"
Response: "Long live the King!"

Teacher: "Everyone who wishes to leave, stand up."
Response: (*All stand.*)

Teacher: "Sit down quietly."
Response: (*All sit.*) "Sh-h-h-h."[11]

Pair off the class into twos. Give each couple an exercise which they will do twice, once to give a cue, once to respond to a cue:

Joe: "Reach for the sky!"
Jim: (*Reaching.*) "All right, but I'll never make it."

Snoopy: "Charlie Brown, you never feed me."
Charlie Brown: (*Hand to forehead.*) "Good grief!"

Characterization

During a discussion about the characters in a script, explain that when we read the characters' lines in Readers Theater we are pretending to be those characters. To do this effectively it is important to know all we can about the characters. What do they think about themselves? What do they think of the other people with whom they interact? Are they honest, silly, lazy, good-natured, grumpy? How will they react to certain situations? We learn the answers to these questions from the story itself. As soon as we do, we have a better idea about how the persons we are pretending to be feel inside and how we can best represent them.

Nellie McCaslin writes, "Actors need to understand human feelings in order to know why people behave as they do. One of the best ways to understand other people is to 'get into their shoes'."[12] She suggests a good way to begin to understand the actions of others is to remember some of our own feelings in particular situations. How did we feel when we were angry, happy, afraid, or excited? Reviving these feelings will aid in characterization.

Exercises

1. As a class, react to the following situations:
   a. Your mother says you can have a party and invite your friends.
   b. You must go to bed early tonight, no television.
   c. Someone has stolen your bicycle.
   d. The teacher is talking about something you find very boring.
   e. Your dog was hit by a car.
   f. You received an A+ on your composition.
2. Pair off. Here are short story lines, one for each couple. Meet privately to work up the sequence. Present it to the class. Reverse roles.
   a. In a hurry to catch the bus, Tom meets Mr. Jeans, his father's friend:
      Mr. Jeans: Hi Tom, how are you?
      Tom: Fine, Mr. Jeans, but . . .
      Mr. Jeans: Is Dad all right? I heard he had a cold?
      Tom: He's okay now, Mr. Jeans, I'm . . .
      Mr. Jeans: Could you give him this little note, Tom, I'm going out of town and won't get the chance to call him.
      Tom: Sure, but . . .
      (*Tom sees the bus leave without him; he reacts.*)
   b. Two friends are discussing pets:
      Jane: I always wanted a dog but my mother says we can't afford to buy one.
      Deb: I have a poodle.
      Jane: Oh, how I would love to have a poodle.
      Deb: My dog is about to have a litter; you can have your pick.
      (*Jane reacts.*)
   c. Two people in a car:
      Bob: You're driving very fast.
      Dan: Don't be silly, I'm only doing forty.
      Bob: But you're a new driver. Go more slowly!
      Dan: Chicken! Just for that I'll go fifty.
      (*Bob reacts.*)
   d. Radio announcer and fan:
      Announcer: It's two to nothing, favor the Loners at the bottom of the ninth. Here comes Butch Jones for the Rokers.
      Fan: Come on Butch!
      Announcer: Strike three! Butch Jones is out and so are the Rokers.
      (*Fan reacts.*)
   e. Principal on loud speaker and Amy:
      Principal: And now students, the announcement you've been waiting for—the winner of our poster contest.
      Amy: I never win anything!

Principal: Amy Smith!
(*Amy reacts.*)

After the exercises, discuss the emotions each character experienced.

Production Aids

Readers Theatre begins as a classroom activity. When students become familiar with their scripts they may want to prepare an assembly production. The following aids will add a professional touch to the performance.

Movement

As the name implies, there is "theatre" in Readers Theatre. The audience expects to see more on stage than a straight line of readers. Stage movements are a dynamic part of a Readers Theatre production. The emphasis, however, is on quality rather than quantity.[13] Readers must create an illusion of action rather than actually engage in the physical motions described in the text.

When the readers creatively portray a portion of a total action, the full picture is completed in the imagination of the audience. When Isabel and her husband in "The Fisherman and His Wife" are to go to bed, the characters have only to close their eyes and allow their heads to fall toward each other in an exaggerated manner. While the narrator explains that the two characters fall asleep, the audience sees a suggestion of the action. In the same manner, when the fisherman takes leave of his wife, instead of walking across the entire stage, he merely faces away from her. First he stands in front of the characters to signify a transition, then he moves towards the flounder, the next character with whom he interacts. Joanna Maclay sums it up when she writes that visual effects in Readers Theatre should "either parallel, contribute to, or in some way support the experience of the text. . . ."[14]

Entrances and exits of the characters as they move in and out of a scene are also more restricted than in the traditional play. Readers may come on stage as they would in a play, but a better way of making known which readers are actually in the sequence is to have those who are outside of it turn their backs to the audience. An alternative way is to have those who are not in the scene lower their heads and remain that way until the time comes for them to enter. Other choices include having characters in the scene stand while nonparticipants sit, or utilizing the "freeze" position, where characters hold perfectly still until needed.[15] In "The Fisherman and His Wife" there is a series of short scenes being played so that the action shifts back and forth rather quickly between flounder and fisherman and wife and fisherman. Both the wife and the flounder can hold poses when they are not involved and resume movement again when they reenter the scene.

Focus

While readers need not memorize lines for a performance, they should learn them well enough to look up often from their scripts. Readers should try to use their eyes to help establish the scene and convey the meaning of the literature to the audience.

Coger and White speak about three types of focus—onstage focus, offstage focus, and a combination of onstage and offstage focus.[16] Onstage focus, usually employed in the conventional play, means that readers look at each other when

they speak and react. If dialogue is addressed to a particular character, the reader should focus on that character. Offstage focus refers to the technique of looking into the eyes of audience members directly or envisioning the scene in some imaginary location out in the audience. If readers are instructed to employ the latter type of focus, they should all look at the same area and try to picture the scene there.

A good plan is to combine both onstage and offstage focus. The narrator and other characters who are reading descriptive material look out into the audience. Characters speaking dialogue interact with one another on stage. It is important to be consistent so that readers and audience alike can visualize the scene and feel themselves a part of it.

Use of Scripts

Scripts are generally held during a Readers Theatre performance. Since these scripts are seen by the audience, uniformity in size and color is desirable. An art lesson can be incorporated into the preparations for the performance. Children can be instructed to make their own script bindings. Oaktag, cardboard, or some other firm material should be used. This can then be covered with a simple fabric, wallpaper, or construction paper.

Scripts should be typed double space, leaving large margins all around, and duplicated uniformly for all participants. Characters' names should stand out from the dialogue. When ready, the readers may circle in red crayon the name of the character they are portraying. It is best not to type in stage directions even in parentheses since children often make the mistake of reading them aloud.

Half the average paper, 5½ × 8½ inches is a good script size. The small script is less obtrusive and does not hide a reader's face. Pupils should be instructed to hold the script in one hand, slightly away from the body, and down from the face.

Sometimes a script can be used as a property. It can become a book, a fan, a gun, or any other object mentioned in the story. For the book report scene in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" readers can use their scripts as notebooks or slates on which they write their reports.

Because they are handled often and take much abuse, scripts should be securely attached to their bindings. Paper fasteners are better than staples or paper clips for this purpose.

Costumes, Sets, and Properties

There is no end to the costumes, sets, and properties one can use in a stage presentation. A production complete in every detail has the advantage of being realistic. One of the values of Readers Theatre is that much of the fuss and bother involved in a full-fledged, costumed play may be omitted without sacrificing the literature or the audience's enjoyment. In fact, when readers discover that the credibility of the characters depends on little more than their interpretive skills, they strive to perfect their delivery.

Just as a minimal amount of stage movement serves to illustrate the action depicted in the text, so a simple distinguishing feature of a costume is all that is needed to suggest the character. Appropriate hats and scarves establish a character's identity. A white mopcap with a wide ruffle does for Margaret in "The Three Wishes." When Charlie Brown sports a baseball cap, or when several brightly colored scarves encircle the forehead of the enchanted flounder, the audience easily recognizes the character and fills out the details imaginatively.

Children can be involved in creating clever headgear for a production. Tin foil and glitter still make a fine king's crown. Attics and thrift shops can be scoured for suitable hats and decorative items for the production.

Settings, too, are best kept simple. Rarely is a backdrop necessary. With extra time children may wish to engage in creating some design to cover an unsightly or distracting wall.

Since there are usually several scene changes during a production, select lightweight furniture rather than heavy, stationary pieces for use on stage. High and low stools are easy to move around. They can represent horses, cars, trains, and much more. Children may sit on them, stand on them, and even lie down on them. Music stands hold scripts for narrators and show them as storytellers rather than characters. Adjustable platforms, lightweight step ladders, benches, boxes, and other items add interest to a performance. Use them cautiously to present a dimensional stage picture.

Readers should be placed in a variety of positions on stage to avoid a straight-line presentation. In the opening scene of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," Charlie Brown may be seated on a high stool, center, Snoopy on a low stool next to him, and the other characters grouped around the two. In Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, the narrator may stand on one side of the stage, Max down center, and the Wild Things may be perched on crates, stools, and a step ladder behind him. The effect is a jungle-like dramatic stage picture.

Audiences are quick to imagine objects mentioned in the script especially if a pantomime accompanies the reading. When Sybil raises her hand to toast the fairies in "The Three Wishes" no glass is needed. And when Margaret, in the same story, bent over, swings her head to and fro like an elephant swinging his trunk, the audience has no trouble visualizing the string of sausages said to be hanging from her nose. Now and then, however, a property may be used. Nothing less than a security blanket will do for Linus in the Charlie Brown script.

Music and Sound Effects

The use of aural effects can add drama and excitement to a Readers Theatre script. If there are children in the class who play an instrument, it is possible, within some material, to include a musical interlude or background music for narration and dialogue. A trumpet announces the arrival of a king. A flute provides the musical accompaniment to a parade or the entrance of a fairy. Drums set a jungle scene. Music will not steal the show if it is carefully rehearsed. Music should be soft, not distracting; a suitable accompaniment to the mood set by the actors.

Excellent effects can be achieved by using kindergarten percussion instruments. A triangle, a hollow block, a small xylophone, and cymbals punctuate and highlight dramatic moments in a story. Gongs and bells mark the beginnings and endings of scenes or segments in a compiled script. In "The Three Wishes," for example, a cymbal clash proclaims the granting of each wish, while in Thurber's "The Little Girl and the Wolf," striking the hollow block marks the demise of the wolf.

Vocal sound effects are always appropriate in Readers Theatre. These can be spoken in chorus, and often help an audience visualize a scene. Barnyard sounds, ocean waves, city noises, crowds, machinery, all can be approximated by the readers to add dimension to the script. Coger and White praise the idea of special effects in Readers Theatre but add a caveat: "The audience's delight can be increased by augmenting and enhancing the literature with imaginative effects . . . but . . . they must not become more important than the literature."[17]

The Performance

When the day of performance arrives, the children will feel the excitement and expectation which naturally accompanies the occasion. Even the most nonchalant pupil will want nothing more than to please his or her classmates and the audience. It is at this time that we must express our confidence in the ability of all the readers to present a successful performance. Our support and enthusiasm will do more to encourage a good performance than last minute warnings and criticisms. A physical exercise which includes stretching and shaking the hands and feet will often relieve tension.[18] Run through a vocal projection exercise before going on stage to relax vocal mechanisms and help control nervousness.

During the final rehearsal we can instruct our readers as to what to expect during the performance. Interruptions from wiggling, squealing children in the audience should be anticipated. It is not unusual for a child in the audience, empathizing with a character on stage, to call out. Unexpected laughter may also surprise the young readers. If the pupils are prepared for these contingencies, they will know how to respond to the behavior of the audience. In particular, the readers should learn to "ride over" interruptions and to remain in character throughout. They must not wait too long for laughter to subside, nor should they laugh at themselves or fellow readers. Playing up to the audience can be overcome with careful preperformance preparation.

Walking on and off stage, knowing where to sit or stand when not in a sequence, and taking a bow at the end are all part of the performance and should be rehearsed beforehand. Attending to such details in advance solidifies the final program and adds to a sense of ease and enjoyment for participants and observers alike.

Any location can be a setting for Readers Theatre. A cleared area in a school library, a media-resource center, or a lunch room are ideal. "On the road," the moving from classroom to classroom with the production is another way of presenting the readings in a warm, friendly atmosphere. Here spectators are physically close to the readers and feel a part of the events taking place on stage. The close proximity also makes it possible to invite audience participation, which delights young observers. In Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, Max shouts suddenly, "Let the wild rumpus start!" It is a surprise and thrill for the audience when the Wild Things run about showing their terrible teeth and claws and pulling two or three spectators on stage to join them.

Performing for a live audience brings great joy to students. The readers earn this wonderful moment of satisfaction. They create a theatrical event from beginning to end. They read, rewrite, study, shape, and plan the show. It does not matter if the final performance is flawed. The important thing is that the pupils have shared a dramatic literary experience with their classmates. They have developed intellectually and artistically from the project. This is its sole justification.

Notes

1. See Maxine McSweeny, *Creative Children's Theatre* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1974), p. 132.
2. Ruth B. Manswer and Leonard Finlan, *The Speaking Voice* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1950), p. 111.
3. Ibid., p. 12.
4. McSweeny, *Creative Children's Theatre*, p. 138.

5. John P. Moncur and Harrison M. Karr, *Developing Your Speaking Voice*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 171.

6. Donald H. Ecroyd, *Speech in the Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 43.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 45.

10. Ibid., p. 46.

11. McSweeny, *Creative Children's Theatre*, p. 123.

12. Nellie McCaslin, *Act Now!* (New York: S. G. Phillips, 1975), pp. 23-24.

13. Joanna Hawkins Maclay, *Readers Theatre: Toward a Grammar of Practice* (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 22.

14. Ibid., pp. 22-23.

15. Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White, *Readers Theatre Handbook*, 1st ed. rev. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1973), p. 84.

16. Ibid., p. 76.

17. Ibid., p. 101.

18. See physical exercises suggested in U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, *Youth Physical Fitness* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), pp. 15-32.

EPILOGUE

The director nods, the xylophone pings for the last time, applause breaks the spell, the children on stage bow. Readers Theatre is over. Spectators babble with delight about the event. "That queen should have her head cut off." "If I had three wishes I would have wished for all the toys in the world." "I loved the part where the donkey fell in the water." Without too much analysis, it is easy to see that everyone enjoyed the experience. For our purposes, however, the project does not end with the final performance. As teachers we can capitalize on the excitement and motivation generated by the event by creating follow-up activities to foster additional writing, reading, and speaking benefits. We can also evaluate the Readers Theatre outcomes and determine their contribution to our language arts curriculum.

Evaluation

Books about measuring educational achievement suggest direct observational techniques such as rating scales and checklists as appropriate methods for evaluating student accomplishment toward specific objectives of a unit of work.[1] The following rating scales and checklists are convenient devices for assessing the Readers Theatre experience. The first scale records general impressions regarding changes in pupil attitudes, motivations, and skills as a result of the project. The second, to be filled out for each child, asks more specific questions about pupil response and progress made in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The scales are supplemented by an abbreviated checklist that is useful in assessing the creative involvement of the children in the project. Finally, for those who are interested in judging the quality of the Readers Theatre script and performance, another checklist is offered.

Rating Scale of Changes
Resulting from the Readers Theater Project

Directions: Place an "X" in the appropriate space below each question. In the space for comments, include anything that helps to clarify your rating.

1. Did those children who usually react negatively to a learning situation respond more readily to Readers Theatre activity?

   no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

   Comment:

2. Were shy and withdrawn children more willing to participate in the Readers Theatre experience than in other performance-oriented activities?

   no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

   Comment:

3. Were children noticeably more motivated to read material connected with Readers Theatre activity than with other available reading?

   no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

   Comment:

4. Were children more willing to write script materials than other writing assignments?

   no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

   Comment:

5. Were children more willing to engage in oral reading exercises relating to the performance of Readers Theatre than in the usual drills?

   no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

   Comment:

6. Were the children more respectful of each other's opinions in the decision-making process connected with the Readers Theatre performance than at other times?

   no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

   Comment:

7. Were children more motivated to produce creative ideas for the Readers Theatre project than on other occasions?

   no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

   Comment:

8. Did the children show greater comprehension and appreciation for the literature selected for the Readers Theatre project than in other reading situations?

   no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

   Comment:

9. Did the children enjoy working on the Readers Theatre project more than other projects in the language arts curriculum?

   no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

   Comment:

10. Did the children show greater interest in doing another Readers Theatre production than they usually exhibit for other projects?

    no change _____ some change _____ substantial change _____

    Comment:

Rating Scale of Pupil Response to the Readers Theatre Project

Directions: Rate each item on the basis of 4 points for outstanding quality or performance, 3 points for better than average, 2 points for average, 1 point for inferior, and 0 for unsatisfactory. Encircle the appropriate number to indicate your rating, and enter the total of these numbers at the bottom of the sheet.

1. How would you rate this pupil's enthusiasm for the project? 0 1 2 3 4
2. To what extent did this pupil seem eager to seek out and read material for possible use in the project? 0 1 2 3 4
3. To what extent did this pupil seem eager to read a part in the group script? 0 1 2 3 4
4. To what extent did this pupil contribute ideas for the creation and staging of the script? 0 1 2 3 4
5. How would you rate this pupil's receptiveness to ideas generated by his or her classmates? 0 1 2 3 4
6. How would you judge this pupil's interest in listening to the readings delivered by his or her fellow classmates? 0 1 2 3 4
7. How would you evaluate this pupil's comprehension of the literature used in the project? 0 1 2 3 4
8. To what extent did this pupil appreciate the literature used in the project? 0 1 2 3 4
9. To what extent did this pupil respond to the voice, diction, and interpretive reading exercises? 0 1 2 3 4
10. To what extent did this pupil exhibit improvement in his or her oral reading skills? 0 1 2 3 4

Total of encircled numbers: _____

Checklist for Evaluating Creative Behavior[2]

1. Intense absorption in listening, observing, and doing
2. Intense animation
3. Use of analogies in speech and writing
4. Tendency to burst out to complete teacher's sentence
5. Eagerness to tell others about discoveries
6. Follow-up at home or in community of ideas generated at school
7. Manifestations of curiosity
8. Spontaneous use of experimentation and discovery approaches
9. Imaginative play
10. Excitement in voice about discoveries
11. Habit of guessing outcomes and checking accuracy
12. Low distractability
13. Tendency to lose awareness of time
14. Continued creative work after "time is up" (bell or deadline)
15. Penetrating observations and questions

Checklist for Evaluating the Readers Theater Script, Staging, and Performance

Script

1. Does the material meet the criteria set down for a good Readers Theatre script?
2. Are the transitions prepared so the program flows intelligibly? Does the program have a beginning, middle, and end, giving it the unity of a complete and finished production?
3. Are the lines divided up meaningfully? Is there an understanding of who is saying what and why?

Staging

1. Are the readers arranged to create an interesting stage picture?
2. Do pupils know how to enter and exit? Are these entrances and exits clear to the audience?
3. If stools, ladders, etc. are used, can they be moved on and off with dispatch?
4. Do pupils focus so that the audience understands where the described action is supposed to take place?
5. Are movements clear? Do they illuminate the text?
6. If sound effects are used, do they serve the purpose intended? Can they be performed and heard clearly?
7. Are all hats that are used easy to put on and take off? Do they stay on and in place throughout the performance?
8. Are the scripts in good shape? Are pages fastened in securely?

Performance

1. Is the script smoothly performed without breakdowns and interruptions?
2. Is speech clear and distinct?
3. Do pupils show an understanding of what they are reading? Do they avoid word-by-word delivery?
4. Are interpretive skills employed to their fullest? Do readers create believable characters and good mental images?
5. Do the readers listen to each other and react meaningfully?
6. Do readers handle scripts unobtrusively and efficiently?
7. Does the performance come to a definite ending? Do all participants know how to bow and where to go at the close of the production?

Follow-Up Activities

Motivation generated by a Readers Theatre event can be sustained after the performance. Below are suggestions which may serve as points of departure for other creative projects.

Speaking

After participating in a Readers Theatre it is valuable for us to hold a class discussion about the success of the program. Conversing together about a shared experience gives each child ample opportunity for self-expression and benefit from the thoughts and feelings of others.

Children can be invited to prepare individual talks to deliver to their class or other classes about all facets of the program. They may wish to describe the technique for preparing the script, directing the characters, reading aloud, and performing for an audience.

Pupils can be asked to make up dialogue around a theme as they talk together in small groups. This exercise can easily precede a collaborative creative writing effort. The recorded results can be utilized in the next Readers Theatre production.

Improvisational activity, a relative of Readers Theatre, can be introduced as a quick way of enacting a dramatic story, poem, or play. Children enjoy trying out character voices for use in future performances.

To encourage spontaneous, effective oral communication, mock television interviews involving the readers, writers, and directors of the script can be set up. These give children an opportunity to ask and respond to questions about the Readers Theatre program. Similarly, a "Meet the Press" panel can be formed with pupils acting as reporters and guests engaged in give and take about the Readers Theatre event.

Writing

To encourage narrative writing we can ask pupils to write a review of the performance for local newspapers. The review should include how the production was prepared and some first-hand observations of what took place on stage.

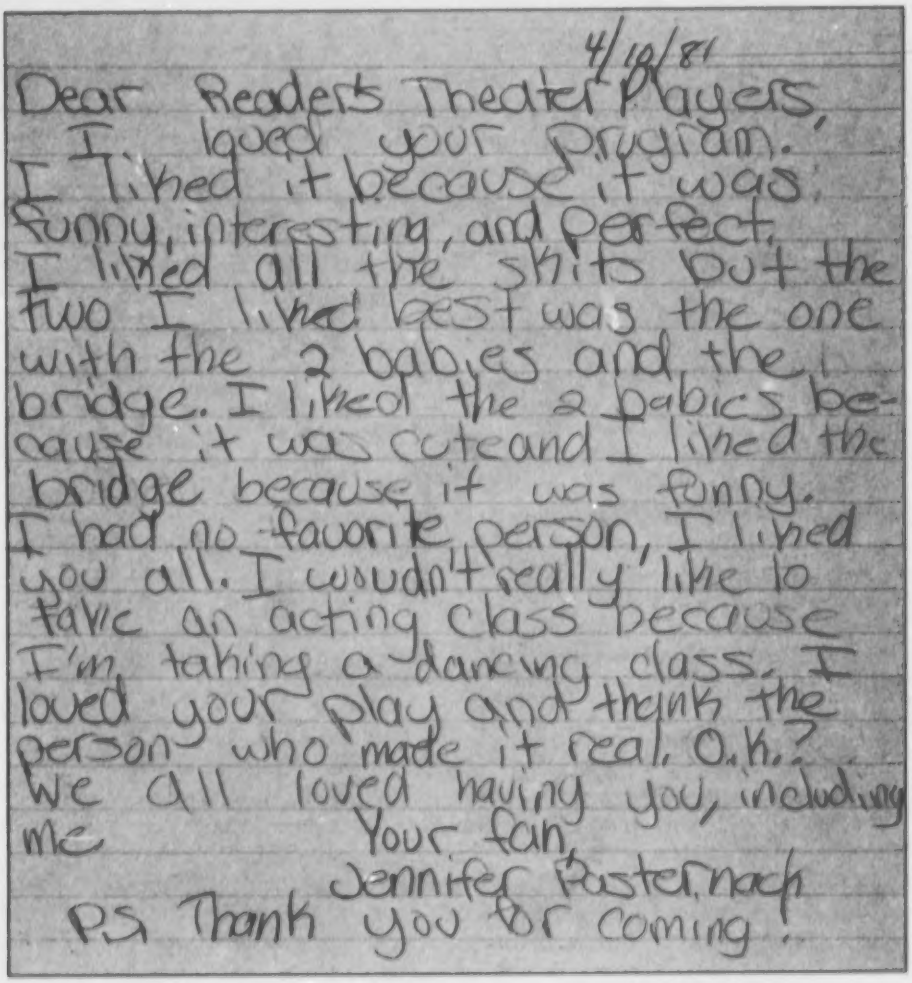
Now that pupils have adapted a story into play form, they may be ready to write an original scene with a two or three-person dialogue. Afterwards the children can invite members of the class to enact these sequences. Writers should be encouraged to improve their scripts as they listen to their work read aloud.

Composition topics grow out of the experience. Teachers may encourage writing on themes such as "How I Felt Being a Character in a Story" or "Performing in Readers Theatre is an Unusual Happening." Writing about first hand experiences helps creative writing abilities.

Listening

Moffett tells us that the principle of learning to listen is that the listening should have a purpose and be acted upon by the listener.[3] Toward this goal, participants and audience members alike can be told to listen for the "big moments" in the script, or to one or more important conversations between characters in a story. Children can then be asked to write or tell about what they heard.

Writing fan letters to the readers is a fun assignment for observers of the performance (see figure 3). The letters can include what the children liked in the production and what favorite story they want to see enacted for a future Readers Theatre.



4/10/81

Dear Readers Theater Players,
I loved your Prygram.
I liked it because it was
funny, interesting, and perfect.
I liked all the skits but the
two I liked best was the one
with the 2 babies and the
bridge. I liked the 2 babies be-
cause it was cute and I liked the
bridge because it was funny.
I had no favorite person, I liked
you all. I wouldn't really like to
take an acting class because
I'm taking a dancing class. I
loved your play and think the
person who made it real. O.K.?
We all loved having you, including
me
Your fan,
Jennifer Pasternack
PS Thank you for coming!

Figure 3. Fan letter from appreciative student audience.

Reading

We can tell the children about a Readers Theatre file which we will keep on hand to store ideas for future productions. After reading a suitable selection for dramatization, the pupil fills out a card as shown in figure 4.

Preparing a segment of a story, poem, or play to be read aloud to others provides motivation for reading outside of the classroom. We should make time available in class for students to deliver oral interpretations of their selections. One period a week can be set aside for this activity, called "Tryouts."

To whet the appetite of slower and reluctant readers, we can read aloud possible Readers Theatre selections. Everyone can then participate in discussions following the reading. This is a good time to begin to build toward another Readers Theatre project.

Pupil Name:

Name of Selection:

Author:

Type: (story, poem, play)

Characters:

Story Line:

Figure 4. Readers Theatre file card.

Let's Give It Again!

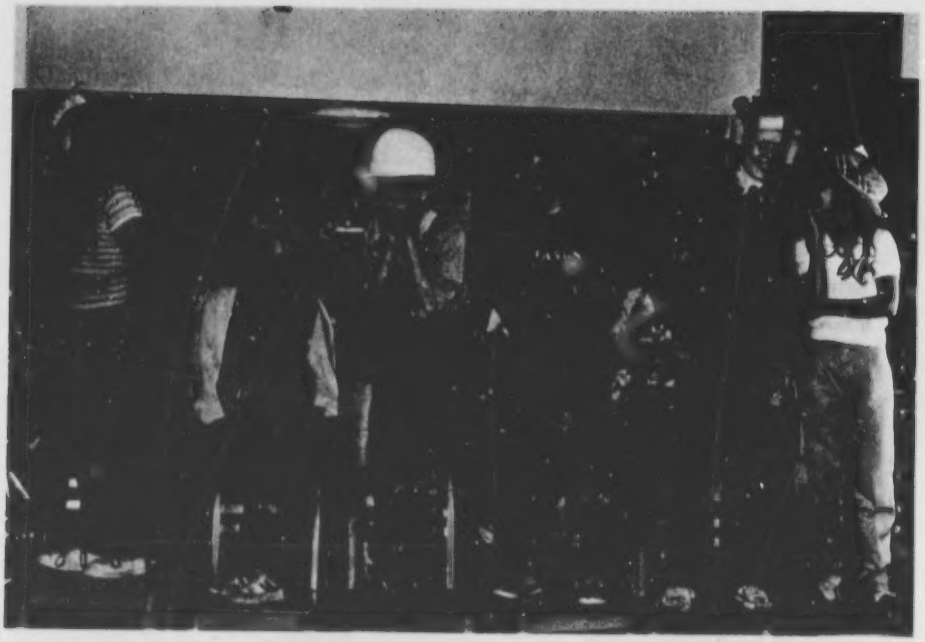
The thrill of performance often motivates children to want another chance to present the program. While extra performances mean new audiences must be recruited, this is not difficult. Other classes in the school, neighboring schools, PTA groups, and the local public library will welcome the program. Our children benefit from additional performances for they learn to adapt to different situations, gain greater self-confidence, and find subtle meanings in the literature they had not recognized before. Like a troupe of players with a show "on the road" pupils work in harmony with one another recreating the excitement of performing with each new circumstance.

Notes

1. See Norman R. Gronlund, *Measurement and Evaluation in Teaching*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 409-432. J. Stanley Ahmann and Marvin D. Glock, *Evaluating Pupil Growth*, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971), pp. 211-237. Fred M. Smith and Sam Adams, *Educational Measurement for the Classroom Teacher*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 188-201.

2. Adapted from a list of 230 different signs of creative classroom behavior compiled by 200 students in E. Paul Torrance's class, "Creative Ways of Teaching." E. Paul Torrance, "Creative Abilities of Elementary School Children," *Teaching for Creative Endeavor*, ed. by William B. Michael (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 20-21.

3. James Moffett, *A Student Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13: A Handbook for Teachers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), p. 267.



PART TWO

A MODEL READERS THEATRE PROGRAM

The model Readers Theatre program presented in this chapter was directed by the author with the cooperation of the classroom teacher at the Number Six School, Woodmere, New York. A fifth grade class composed of students on all reading levels was selected to participate. This project was accomplished in ten one-hour sessions, plus the performance. The sessions took place on ten consecutive days. A description of each day's activity is offered below. Many of the preparatory exercises mentioned as part of a day's activities are described in the Classroom Procedures and Production Aids chapter, above.

Day One

The principal arranged for us to come early in the morning so that the children would be alert and receptive to new ideas. The plan was to engage the pupils in two discussions. The first would center on plays and the children's theatrical experience. This would lead us into an explanation of Readers Theatre. The second discussion would concern the fable, "The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey." We would present the story to the class and have them read it silently. Afterwards we would talk together about the author, the plot, and how we might adapt it for Readers Theatre.

Here is what happened:

Readers Theatre Leader: What do you think of when you hear the word "theatre"?

Gerri: Actors and actresses.

Danny: Costumes.

Tracy: Scenery.

Richard: Curtains and spotlights.

Steven: Scripts and a director.

R.T.L.: Very good. You seem to know something about plays and the theatre. Can you tell me about some of the plays you have seen?

Wendy: I saw *Annie* on Broadway. It was a musical with a lot of singing and dancing and acting.

Jackie: I was in a play last year. It was a Chinese play called *The Prince*. I played the nurse.

Lynne: And I painted some of the scenery and pulled the curtain.

R.T.L.: Well, you know a lot about what goes into producing a play. Can anyone name another type of theatre, other than a play?

Kenny: I once went to an opera. There were singers instead of actors. The singers sang the story.

Roberta: There's ballet where everyone dances.

Gerri: There are puppet shows and magic shows.

R.T.L.: Yes, there are many situations involving performers and an audience. There is even a kind of theatre where the players read to their audience. This is called Readers Theatre.

Liz: You mean the actors hold books on stage and just read them aloud to the people?

R.T.L.: Well, something like that except the readers don't just read their stories in an ordinary way, they read as if they were the characters in the stories.

Melanie: I know, it's like a storyteller who reads with a lot of expression. My library has a storyteller like that. She pretends to be all the characters in the stories she reads.

R.T.L.: Yes, Readers Theatre is like story telling, but instead of one storyteller there are several. Each reader pretends to be one or more of the characters in the story so it is something like a play, too.

Norman: Do the actors read from stories or plays?

R.T.L.: They can read everything—stories, poems, and plays. But even if they read a play, they hold their scripts on stage and only suggest the action. We'll talk more about the differences between Readers Theatre and a conventional play tomorrow.

The children were told that for the next ten days they would be preparing a Readers Theatre program for presentation to the school. To learn the process they would first work on adapting and performing a sample story. Copies of this sample, "The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey," were then passed out to each child to read silently. After a discussion about the author and a review of the theme and the plot of the story, the children began the adaptation by setting the scene and determining the characters:

R.T.L.: Let's start writing our script by setting the scene. Where do you think this fable takes place?

Danny: I think it takes place a long time ago because no one sells donkeys in a market these days.

Melanie: It could be today. Maybe in some small town in Arizona or somewhere. They still sell donkeys like that.

Dominick: It's hard to say because the whole thing is a fable. I guess it could be anytime.

R.T.L.: Shall we say "anytime" then as the time of the story?

All: Okay.

R.T.L.: Where does the story take place?

Jane: In a little village.

Liz: It's not in a village because they are on a road somewhere.

Richard: Yeah, so why don't we just say on a road somewhere going to market.

R.T.L.: That sounds right. Now, can you tell me who are the characters in the story?

Steven: A miller and his son.

Tracy: Also the donkey.

Scott: But the donkey doesn't talk.

R.T.L.: Let's include the donkey. Perhaps you'll want to write a line or two for him to say.

Richard: Well, for that matter, the son doesn't say anything in the story either. We can give him a couple of lines, too.

R.T.L.: Yes, when we adapt a story for our kind of theatre, we are free to write in dialogue where we need it. Now, what other characters are found in the fable?

Roberta: The farmer, a peddler, and a woman.

Jimmy: Also, some townspeople.

R.T.L.: Good. Is there anyone else you want to include?

Steve: Yes, a storyteller.

R.T.L.: I'm glad you mentioned him. We also call the storyteller a narrator. Tell me, what part of the fable will he read?

Steve: Well, there are parts in the story where no one is speaking but there is important stuff to know. We can have the narrator read those parts.

R.T.L.: Good. The narrator is an important character. He sets the scene and gives descriptions of action that the other characters in the story can't enact.

On large poster script taped to an easel in front of the room, we noted decisions as to the time, place, and characters in the fable. Some of the students copied this information into their notebooks.

Comments

Room 209, as they were called, was an average class of twenty-eight students. The more out-going pupils participated in the opening discussion, while others were more reticent at first. One child, Ram, who we learned was generally disinterested in any class work, sat with his head down.

Once the children were told that they would be preparing for a school production, they were motivated to read the fable presented in class. They became eager to answer the questions that led to transposing the story into a script. The goal of a performance in only two short weeks heightened the responses of even the most passive members of the class. Pupils were especially encouraged to understand that their contributions played an important part in the finished program.

We were pleased to see the magic of a Readers Theatre project begin to take hold on Room 209. By the end of the first session almost everyone was involved in the deliberations and looking forward to the days ahead.

Day Two

On the second day we planned to compare Readers Theatre, item by item, with the conventional play and list the differences on the chalkboard. We would then

introduce the nine acting areas of the stage by chalking them on the classroom floor. This would help the children learn how to give and take stage directions. Finally, we would continue with the adaptation of "The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey," begun the day before.

Here is what happened:

R.T.L.: Can you describe some of the differences between the conventional play and Readers Theatre?

Richard: In regular theatre you have to memorize your lines. In Readers Theatre you just read them.

R.T.L.: Any other differences?

Rose: In Readers Theatre you don't need scenery, a curtain, or an intermission.

Kenny: There is less action in Readers Theatre.

Steve: But the readers can do things which show the audience what is happening, can't they?

R.T.L.: Of course. There isn't the kind of action found in a conventional play so it is an important part of Readers Theatre to suggest some of the action.

Tracy: Well if there isn't a lot of action or moving around, how does the audience know where the story takes place or when some time has passed?

R.T.L.: Does anyone know the answer to that?

Lori: The narrator reads where the story takes place and all the other stuff the audience needs to know.

R.T.L.: Very good. Are there any other differences between Readers Theatre and plays that you can think of?

Ram: In a play you have to try to speak like the characters would really sound. In Readers Theatre you can speak in your regular voice.

Richard: I don't think that's right. I think you have to try to act like the character even if you're reading it from a book or something. That part is just like acting in a play.

R.T.L.: Yes. When you listen to a story being read aloud, you are much more interested in it if the reader does a little bit of acting.

We chalked the nine stage acting areas on the floor and discussed them. The children were told that during the next session they would be playing some games to help them learn the stage locations.

The story was passed out. Pupils were asked to read the opening paragraph silently and decide on the first lines of the script. As before, the material was written on poster paper on the easel. Again many of the students copied the script in their notebooks:

R.T.L.: How shall we begin? What shall be the opening lines of our script and which character will read them?

Wendy: The narrator should speak first.

R.T.L.: Good. We need him to set the scene.

Steve: He should say, "One day, there was a miller . . ."

Richard: No, there should be more adjectives. Let him say, "One sunny day . . ." instead of "one day."

R.T.L.: All right. Can you continue?

Richard: "One sunny day a miller and his son set off for the marketplace."

Ram: Then the miller can say, "Let's not ride the donkey so he will be fresh when we sell him."

R.T.L.: That's a good line. Now let's establish that the donkey was with them and that they were going to the market to sell him. What shall we do about that?

Jane: Why don't we use the line that's written in the story? It says "They were going to sell their old donkey."

R.T.L.: And who will say that line?

Jimmy: The narrator.

R.T.L.: Fine! What next?

Danny: Give the son a line. He doesn't say anything.

Ram: Let him say, "Father, shall we ride the donkey today"?

R.T.L.: Very good. Incidentally, we want to give the donkey some lines. Can anyone think up something?

Lynne: Let him bray.

R.T.L.: Anything else? Can we make it funny?

Dominick: When the father gets on him the donkey can say "Give me a break."

Ram: Or how about, "Oh, my aching back!"

Calvin: When both the miller and his son get on him, the donkey should yell, "Give me an Alka Seltzer!"

R.T.L.: Those are great lines. Let's use them. You're doing fine.

Comments

Outlining the differences between the conventional play and Readers Theatre served to develop a fuller understanding of the new technique. The discussion gave the children another opportunity to speak about plays and theater, a subject which obviously interested many of them.

Drawing the acting areas of the stage on the floor produced a good response from all. Everyone wanted to learn the locations. There was great excitement about the stage games promised for the following day.

Motivation continued to be high when we shifted to adapting the fable. We noticed that the brighter students still seemed to contribute the most, but several of the others made very amusing suggestions for good lines before the second session ended. Even Ram began to take a genuine interest in the proceedings. He was further encouraged by the warm reception to his comments.

Day Three

We scheduled stage-location games for the third day and prepared copies of a sketch showing the nine acting areas of the stage. At the bottom of the page we included some stage terms and definitions which we planned to go over in class. We would then complete the adaptation of our fable.

Here is what happened:

The sketches were passed out and reviewed. The pupils played stage-location games. A discussion of terms followed:

R.T.L.: When we block our script, what will we be doing with it?

Dawn: (*After reading the definition.*) We will be telling the characters where we want them to be in the scene.

R.T.L.: Good. Now Roberta, if the director told you to counter, what would you do?

Roberta: I would move out of the way.

R.T.L.: Right. Lori, if I told you to stand above the desk on stage, where would you go?

Lori: I would go upstage behind the desk.

R.T.L.: You are all very good learners. What can we do in Readers Theatre to show that characters are not on stage?

Jimmy: To show they were off stage they could turn their backs.

R.T.L.: Yes. Is there another way to show this? Scott?

Scott: They could duck down.

Calvin: They could sit down in the audience.

Norman: The characters could walk off to the side.

R.T.L.: Those are all fine suggestions which we will try when we block our script.

After the discussion, copies of the fable were passed out once again. The adaptation continued:

R.T.L.: There seems to be a great deal of narration beginning with the line, "The miller and his son both got down." Is there a way we can cut some of it?

Gerri: Yes, we can change it into lines for the characters to speak.

R.T.L.: Okay Gerri, take a line from the narrator and give it to one of the characters.

Gerri: Instead of the narrator saying that they tied the donkey's feet up, the miller can say, "Let us tie up the donkey's four feet and put the pole on our shoulders."

R.T.L.: Good thinking! Now what do you think the donkey would say being carried upside down tied to a pole?

Melanie: "I'll get you for this!"

Liz: "I'm getting sea sick."

R.T.L.: That's a funny line. Now, let's look at the next part of the story where it says that the townspeople came running from all sides. Who should read those lines?

Richard: It seems like the narrator must say those lines.

R.T.L.: Why?

Richard: Because it's description. He's describing how the people felt about what they saw.

R.T.L.: That's true, but can't we have the people saying those lines themselves?

Steve: Can we have everybody saying them together?

R.T.L.: Why not? Let's have some choral reading in this script. Why don't we try it to see how it sounds.

All: "From all sides the people came running. Never had they seen such a sight."

The children completed the adaptation. It was to be typed and ready for reading by the next session.

Comments

By the time the stage-location games were over, we were certain most pupils could move about the stage on command. The technical terms included on the handout sheet were understood as well.

The most elusive concept for the children was that of suggested action rather than realistically portrayed action. What would we do when the script called for tying up the donkey's four legs, turning him upside down, and carrying him on a pole? Some pupils suggested we use a cardboard or stuffed donkey and actually show the procedure. We explained that with a simple movement to indicate the action, such as standing side-ways with the donkey in the middle, the audience would see the occurrence in their mind's eye.

Work on the adaptation was concluded with many exceptionally creative suggestions for the script. The children were pleased with the results and appeared anxious to do the reading scheduled for the following day.

Day Four

Armed with copies of the completed Readers Theatre script, "The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey," we planned to spend most of the fourth session reading and rehearsing it. We prepared several vocal exercises for the rehearsal to encourage good projection. To keep motivation high, we would again announce that if all went well, we would be ready at the end of our tenth session to present a full-fledged production to an audience. Everyone in the class would be involved.

Here is what happened:

We announced the date of the future production. The children, as a group and then in pairs, worked through the vocal projection exercises.

A copy of the finished adaptation was passed out to each child. The children were requested to read it through silently. A brief discussion of the script followed:

R.T.L.: You did a very good job of adapting the fable into script form. Are there any changes you would like to make?

Rose: How can the townspeople say, "Some people pitied the miller and his son," when they *are* the "some people?"

R.T.L.: Readers Theatre often allows us at the same time to be both the storyteller and the characters in the story. As we said before, Readers Theatre is story telling in a very dramatic way.

Richard: I think we should leave out a lot of those "he said" and "she said" words.

R.T.L.: Let's try it with and without these words when we read the script aloud. Then we'll decide.

Three casts were selected, which would give everyone in the class a chance to read. Each cast, in turn, read the script aloud from their seats two times. The first readings were uninterrupted. During the second readings some interpretive-reading suggestions were made:

R.T.L.: (*To the farmer.*) As a farmer you have always used the donkey as a beast of burden carrying heavy loads. Now you see this incredible scene. The two tired, hot people are trudging alongside a donkey who is carrying nothing at all. How do you feel?

Steve: I can't believe it.

R.T.L.: Very good. Try to read the lines that way.

Steve: "What fools you are! A donkey is to ride isn't it? Then why do you walk?"

R.T.L.: Fine! Now, Miller, do you think you would do what the farmer tells you right away?

Richard: I guess I would think about it a minute.

R.T.L.: Of course. Why not pause before you speak.

Richard: (*Pausing.*) "Climb up on the donkey, Son."

R.T.L.: (*To the donkey.*) Suppose two heavy people got on your back. How would you feel?

Norman: Loaded down. Ugh.

R.T.L.: Right. Then try reading as if you had a heavy load on your back.

Norman: "Double trouble. Give me an Alka Seltzer."

R.T.L.: Good. Now tell me, when a word is to be stressed what can you do to indicate that on your script?

Lynne: Underline it.

R.T.L.: Right. How can we show we want a pause in the sentence?

Lori: Put a dash or a line where the reader must wait.

R.T.L.: Yes. Use a slash line like this ["/"] for a short pause and a double slash like this ["//"] for a long pause. For example, ". . . and there was the donkey going to market // *upside down.*"

Robert: Since I am the narrator, how shall I read my lines?

R.T.L.: Well, if you wanted the audience to imagine the donkey kicking about, you have to help them to imagine it by reading expressively.

Robert: You mean when I read the words "struggle" and "wiggle" I should read them in a struggly and wiggly way?

R.T.L.: Exactly.

The readings and interpretation direction continued until everyone had a chance to participate.

Comments

The children remained excited about the prospect of creating and staging a complete production for an audience. They responded well to the vocal exercise.

There was complete cooperation during the reading rehearsals. Ram now wanted to be part of the project and was a willing participant.

We were careful to select the good readers for the first round of rehearsals so that struggling readers would be familiar with the lines when their turn came. This idea worked out very well.

We gave the children interpretive reading directions. They liked working on their parts and enjoyed the special attention they received.

Day Five

For the first part of the fifth session, we planned to continue working on theatre skills. Our discussion would concern "onstage" and "offstage" focus. Following this, we would block the sample script, "The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey." We mapped out the positions and movements of each character on a series of sketches and made enough copies of these for the class. After the children had studied the sketches, each cast, in turn, would be asked to read the script in position on stage. We hoped to coordinate the script reading with the prescribed stage movements by the end of this work period.

Here is what happened:

A discussion about focus took place. Blocking charts were then passed out to each child:

R.T.L.: Can you find your character in the sketches?

All: Yes.

R.T.L.: All right, where do the miller, the son, and the donkey stand when the story begins?

Richard: Center stage.

R.T.L.: Good. Where does the narrator stand?

Wendy: Down right.

R.T.L.: Correct. If you look on the sketch you will see a half box in front of the narrator. Can anyone tell me what that represents?

Danny: A music stand to put the script on.

R.T.L.: Yes. And what are those two circles supposed to be?

Lynne: Two stools, a high one and a low one.

R.T.L.: Right. Now when the farmer is not in the scene, where does he go?

Tracy: Up left.

R.T.L.: Good. Notice the little arrows. They point to where the character is facing. Why does the farmer face up stage and not the audience?

Tracy: The farmer faces up stage to show the audience that he is not in the scene.

R.T.L.: Very good.

The blocking was completed. Each cast rehearsed on the classroom stage chalked on the floor.

Comments

We were pleased to see the children become more familiar with the Readers Theatre technique. The concept of onstage and offstage focus was quickly understood in the framework of an upcoming production.

Once all the blocking symbols were explained, the children found the sketches easy to follow. We were certain they would have no trouble preparing such a plan when called on to block a story of their own.

Blocking our fable went smoothly. All of the pupils had an opportunity to read their lines and walk through their parts. By the time the third cast rehearsed, the readers all knew their positions on stage and where and when to move.

Day Six

For the first part of session six we planned more speech warming-up exercises. This time our concentration would be on diction. We would divide the class into workshop groups. Each workshop would receive its story to prepare for the final Readers Theatre production. Toward this end we brought along five folk tales which, together with "The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey," would make up the program we chose to call, "Folk Stories from Around the World."

Each workshop would be composed of students with mixed reading abilities. The number of pupils would match the number of characters needed for a given story. To make it easier for some of the slower learners to prepare for the production, we would give them the sample fable we worked on in class to perform.

We would inform the class that in four days we hoped to give an "out-of-town" performance (a preview for another class). If this went well, we would schedule a performance for most of the school to see.

Here is what happened:

After practicing diction exercises, plans for the production were made and a date set for an out-of-town performance. The selected stories were distributed and one, "The Stonecutter," was discussed:

R.T.L.: What special thing do you notice when you read this tale?

Jackie: There is only one dialogue line in the whole story.

R.T.L.: That's right. How will you prepare this story for Readers Theatre?

Scott: We can make up some dialogue lines from the narrative sections the way we did in "The Miller."

R.T.L.: That's one good way to involve more characters. Is there another?

Roberta: We can leave the story the way it is but whenever a character is mentioned, that character can read those lines.

R.T.L.: Very good. Can you give the class an example of what you mean?

Roberta: We can make a character called Tasaku who can say the lines about himself the way the townpeople did in the fable.

R.T.L.: Tell us which line Tasaku would read.

Roberta: The story opens with, "Tasaku was a lowly stonecutter," and it goes on about him. Well, Tasaku can read those lines.

R.T.L.: Fine. Can someone continue?

Rose: Then, in the next paragraph it says, "One day a prince went by." The Prince will read these lines about himself.

R.T.L.: Excellent. What a wonderful way of doing this poetic story. I think it's going to be a very interesting selection.

The class was divided up into workshop groups. Each met in a different section of the room to begin work on its assigned story. The teacher walked around the room helping the children with their adaptations.

Comments

The diction exercises helped the children improve their delivery of the lines.

The children became increasingly excited about the upcoming performance. Most were motivated and curious enough to read all the distributed stories as well as their own.

The groups went to work on their projects with enthusiasm. The room was alive with animated talk as pupils exchanged ideas about how their story was to be adapted. We walked around to offer help, but were surprised to find how little was needed.

Day Seven

The subject of "cues" would be our theatre lesson for the seventh session. We would use several exercises to illustrate how to effectively respond on cue. The workshop groups would meet again to complete their adaptations and begin the blocking.

Here is what happened:

After the discussion about cues, the children were asked about their progress:

R.T.L.: Has any group completed its adaptation as yet?

Dawn: Yes, we finished "The Clever Judge."

Norman: And we did "The Little Girl and the Wolf."

R.T.L.: Would you each tell us a little about what you decided to do?

Dawn: In group one we took it paragraph by paragraph. We decided who was talking and assigned the lines to that person.

Richard: Then we cut out all the "he saids" in the story and we gave the nondialogue lines to a narrator.

Dawn: Except we cut some of the narrator's lines in the beginning because they were too long.

Norman: In group two we didn't cut out anything in our script. We even left in lines like ". . . said the little girl," and ". . . the wolf said." We have the characters saying those lines themselves.

Jane: We didn't cut anything out of "The Stonecutter" either. We just wrote in a whole bunch of characters. Now we have more characters than kids to play them.

R.T.L.: What will you do?

Jane: Some of us are going to have to read more than one character. But that's

all right. We're going to change our hats so that the audience will know who's speaking.

R.T.L.: A good idea! You're all doing very well. As soon as you complete the adaptations, we'll go on to the blocking.

The groups met to work on their adaptations and their blocking sketches. The teacher gave assistance where needed.

Comments

We were delighted to find several of the groups already finished with their adaptations when the session began. It appears they were so anxious to work on the scripts that they did so in their free time. With some help from us, they then completed their blocking sketches and were ready for rehearsal. The children were very pleased with the work they accomplished and could not wait to see their scripts "in print" (typed and duplicated), promised for the following day.

We presented exercises for responding on cue. We involved the students in game-like techniques which both captured their imagination and added to their knowledge of theatre skills.

Day Eight

We came prepared with the finished scripts, typed and dittoed. Part of session eight would include making simple, oaktag script covers. We would also give instructions on how and where to hold the scripts during the performance. The groups would then proceed with blocking and reading rehearsals. For homework we would ask each pupil to write a line or two of introduction for the group's story. These we would discuss on the following day.

Here is what happened:

The scripts were passed around and examined by the class. Students constructed colorful covers. Then the problems of handling the scripts during the production were discussed:

R.T.L.: Suppose I were a reader on stage. How would you advise me to hold the script. Like this? (*In front of face.*)

All: No.

R.T.L.: Why not?

Scott: Because we can't see your face.

Liz: And we can't hear you too well.

R.T.L.: Where shall I hold it then?

Lori: You should hold it down from your face about to the middle of your chest.

R.T.L.: Like this? (*Holding script down with both hands.*)

Tracy: Yes, but not with two hands.

R.T.L.: Why not?

Tracy: Because you might need a hand free to make a motion in the story.

R.T.L.: Can you give me an example of such a motion?

Tracy: Well, in "The Four Silly Brothers," the man is supposed to hit the brothers on the head. He'll need a hand to make believe he's doing it.

Lori: In our script, "The Clever Judge," the judge must hand the plaintiff a ring. He should have one hand free to do it.

R.T.L.: You're right. We should hold the script in one hand. Now, can anyone tell me the difference between a stage motion and a real-life motion?

Jane: I think a stage motion should be bigger than a real-life motion.

R.T.L.: Why is that?

Jane: So that everyone, even those sitting in the back, will be able to see what it is.

Liz: Yes, especially because in Readers Theatre we're only going to be using suggestions of the action. We want to get the audience to understand what we're doing.

R.T.L.: Very good. Let's practice some motions indicated in the stories as we hold the scripts in one hand.

The children worked on some of the actions and motions together as a class. Afterwards, in groups, with blocking sketches in hand, they rehearsed positions and movements as they read the lines of their scripts. The teacher helped in these efforts.

For homework, pupils were asked to prepare short introductions to their stories. They were also told to bring in any old hats they might have at home.

Comments

The children expressed pride in seeing their work neatly typed and distributed to the class. The covered scripts looked very professional, and everyone felt glad to have one in hand at last. No one seemed to have any trouble with our explanations as to where and how to hold the scripts during a performance.

At first the blocking rehearsals produced a great deal of lively doings. In time, however, a director either emerged or was appointed by each group and everything began to stabilize. We were certain one or two more run-throughs would result in a satisfactory performance.

Day Nine

On the ninth session we would rehearse the six stories in the small lunchroom. This was where the final performance was to take place. Before that, however, we would allow time for group preparation of introductions. Final decisions would be made about hats for the presentation. For later on in the day, we arranged to present the performance to a sixth grade class who consented to be our "out of town" audience.

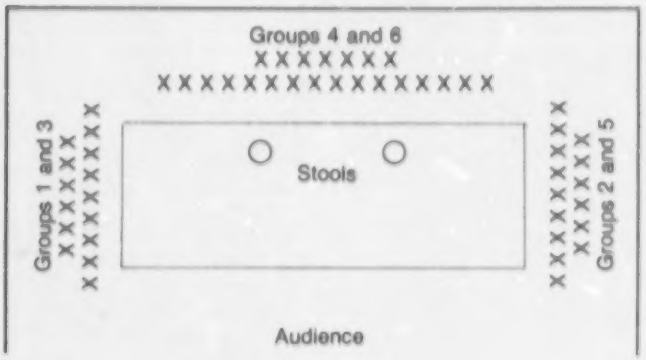
Here is what happened:

The pupils met in groups to pool ideas about introducing their stories. No introduction was to be more than three sentences. The teacher walked around to offer help with these lines. All of the final selections were read aloud. One member of each group, usually the narrator in the story, was assigned the material for the performance. The children then discussed the hats they brought in and

decisions were made as to who would wear what. (Some of the more fanciful hats were constructed by the children during art periods.)

The class moved to the small lunchroom where the first, full rehearsal was held. This was directed by the teacher. Since the lunchroom area was rather large, the children chalked the stage size out on the floor. This defined the playing space and corresponded to the area they were accustomed to in the classroom.

Each group was told when and where to enter the stage. They were also shown where to sit when their sequence was not on. The illustration below indicates the seating arrangement and the stage area.



Later that day, the "out of town" trial performance was presented for a sixth grade class. The observers were asked to listen for three things:

1. Were the lines read clearly and distinctly?
2. Did the readers look up from their scripts enough to make contact with each other and with audience members?
3. Were the action and the movements of the readers meaningful?

After the program the observers analyzed the performance while the readers noted their reactions.

R.T.L.: How did you like this Readers Theatre?

Pupil: The stories were really interesting and all the readers spoke clearly and distinctly.

R.T.L.: This trial performance is to help us to learn how to improve our production. Do you wish to suggest any changes?

Pupil: I think it was great except the readers read too fast. If they would slow down they would sound more like the characters they're supposed to be.

Pupil: Yes. They sound like they want to get through with it real fast.

R.T.L.: Are there any other suggestions?

Pupil: I want them to look away from their scripts more. Sometimes you can't see their faces.

R.T.L.: Very good comments. What about the action and the movements of the readers? Did you understand what was taking place at all times?

Pupil: Yes. All the action was good. I could even tell that the sun was burning the flowers in "The Stonecutter."

Pupil: And I could tell when Tasaku became the mountain by the way he stood.

Pupil: Also it was easy to imagine people sitting on the donkey's back when they sat on the two stools right behind him. That was good.

Pupil: I liked that the characters turned their backs on the audience when they weren't in the scene. It's amazing how you didn't need any curtains or anything to know this.

R.T.L.: Thank you for helping us. You are very good critics.

Comments

The children worked efficiently in their small groups preparing introductions for the stories. Time forced us to limit this creative writing activity to fifteen minutes.

Once on stage, everyone was eager to make the program work. We noted, happily, that everyone in the class was now completely involved in the project.

The pupils followed directions very well. In a short time the children had mastered the necessary stage language. We observed that some of the readers did not trust themselves to look up from their scripts to make contact with fellow players. This problem was alleviated by designating certain words in the script as signal words. On seeing these cues, a reader would read ahead silently and finish the line looking up. We would review this technique on the following day.

A potential problem was absenteeism. Who would play the parts of absent students? We soon learned that almost any child in the class could step into another's role with little trouble. Having read and heard the other stories during the preparations, pupils were familiar with all the lines and quickly learned the related movements.

The trial performance before a sixth grade class was a worthwhile experience. Many of the program's loose ends came together as readers readily accepted the praise and criticisms of their peers. The repeated advice to "slow down" and "look up" had a beneficial effect on the players. Everyone seemed ready for the final performance the next day.

Day Ten

The performance was scheduled for the period following the tenth session. We prepared for it with three major activities. First, we would have the children read the scripts once more from their seats. By separating the reading from the action, pupils would be more conscious of their lines. They would be encouraged to read more slowly and feel secure enough to look up often. Second, we would discuss some of the problems players might encounter during the performance, such as interruptions from audience members and mishaps with hats and scripts. Third, we prepared a set of physical exercises designed to relieve tensions and stage jitters.

Following the session, Grade Five, Room 209, would file into the small lunchroom. There the audience of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders would be waiting. The Readers Theatre production, "Folk Stories from Around the World," would be presented.

Here is what happened:

The children read the script aloud from their seats. They were instructed to recite their lines very slowly, pausing often to take deep breaths. They were also urged to look up as often as possible using the designated signal words as cues.

Following the rehearsal, a discussion about possible performance problems was held:

R.T.L.: Can anyone tell me what you should do if someone in the audience calls out to you, or interrupts you in some other way while you are reading in performance?

Lori: I think we shouldn't pay any attention to them and go on with the reading.

R.T.L.: Yes, a professional will ignore outbursts from the audience. But what if people laugh at the funny lines?

Richard: We should wait until the laughter dies down and then go on.

R.T.L.: That's right. It is important to stay in character at all times so that the audience sees you as the person you are playing. Okay, what should you do if, by chance, your hat falls off your head or your script falls down?

Steve: We shouldn't let it bother us and try to pick it up when we can.

R.T.L.: Should you apologize or laugh?

Jane: No, as you said, we should stay in character and do the best we can.

R.T.L.: Very good. If your hat falls off, you may want to leave it on the floor and continue reading without it. Pick it up at a time when you are not noticed so much. Of course, to avoid this problem altogether, your hat should be fastened on securely.

Rose: What should we do if we make a mistake or we lose our place?

R.T.L.: Can someone answer that?

Ram: We must go on and not make a big deal about it.

Calvin: Can't someone whisper the line to the person who forgets?

Jackie: That's too noticable. I think the person should just go on.

R.T.L.: Yes. It's good to go on and forget about a missed line. The trick is to try not to make a face or otherwise show the audience that a mistake has been made.

Scott: Should we wear our hats while we are in our seats waiting to go on?

R.T.L.: What do you think about that?

Scott: I think we shouldn't let anyone see us with our hat on until we go on stage.

R.T.L.: I think that's a good idea. It will be more surprising and interesting for the audience if they see you for the first time in character on stage. Another reason for this is that the spectators should not be distracted from the performance taking place. In your seats around the stage you are very visible to the audience. It is best for you to remain quiet and unnoticed.

After the discussion, pupils engaged in physical exercises.

When the session ended, the class went to the small lunchroom where they took their seats around the stage area. All hats and scripts were placed under their chairs until needed. Before the performance began, the principal made the following announcement to the audience:

> Principal: Two weeks ago, students in Room 209 began preparation for a Readers Theatre. After working on one story together with the director, each group transposed, cast, blocked, and directed its own story. The result is the Readers Theatre you will see today. This is not a conventional play, but a series of dramatized readings. The program is called, "Folk Stories from Around the World."

The spectators were then told that after the performance each of them would be asked to write a letter to one of the characters. The letter would describe the writer's impressions of the character as he appeared in the story.

The room quieted down when the teacher sounded a bell and the Readers Theatre script, "Folk Stories from Around the World," became reality.

Comments

The last reading rehearsal was the best yet. It was obvious that the children felt completely at home with their lines. At last, many of the characters seemed to come to life.

The discussion about possible mishaps during the performance relieved pupils' anxiety about what to do in case of an emergency on stage. While much of this information was given to the readers during the ten sessions, these last minute specifics helped to allay their fears.

Physical exercise was an important beforehand activity. The children appeared much less tense and nervous after the brief workout. By eleven o'clock, the time of the performance, everyone in Room 209 was in good spirits, physically and mentally ready to do their best.

The Readers Theatre production was a success by all standards. The ordinary lunchroom was transformed into a theatre. Students learned to read with meaningful expression. They moved professionally about the stage. Interacting with their classmates, they created a bond between themselves, the audience, and the literature which no one of them would soon forget.

MODEL PROGRAM SCRIPT: *FOLK STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD*[1]

Cast of Characters

Narrator I & II	Sun
King	Cloud
Farmer	Mountain
Son	Matthew
Miller	Mark
Donkey	Luke
Peddler	John
Woman I & II	Man
Blacksmith	Judge
Townspeople I & II	Plaintiff
Tasaku	Defendant
Prince	Wolf
Spirit	Girl

Folk Stories from Around the World

Narrator I: A hundred years ago an African storyteller said that when one has traveled along a road he can sit down and wait for a story to overtake him. He said a story is like the wind. It comes from a far place and it can pass behind the back of a mountain. Here now is Room 209 to present a Readers Theatre. We hope you will allow our stories to overtake you.

Our first tale is about stories. Listen as we learn of a clever farmer who outwitted a king in the Ethiopian folk tale entitled "The Storyteller."

Narrator II: Once, there was a king in the land of Shoa who loved nothing so much as listening to stories. Every moment of his spare time was spent listening to the tales told by the storytellers of the country, but a time came when there were no stories left that he hadn't heard. His hunger for stories came to be known in the neighboring kingdoms, and wandering singers and storytellers came to Shoa to be rewarded for whatever new tales they could bring. But the more tales the king heard the fewer were left that he had not heard. And so, finally, in desperation he let it be known throughout the land that whatever storyteller could make him cry, "Enough! No more!" would receive a great piece of land and the title of Ras, or prince. Many men, inspired by the thought of such wealth and honors, came to tell him stories, but always he sat and listened eagerly without ever protesting that he had

heard too much. One day a farmer came and offered to tell stories until the king was so full of them that he would cry out in protest. The king smiled.

King: The best storytellers in Ethiopia have come and gone without telling me enough. And now you come in your simple innocence to win the land and the title of Ras. Well, begin, you may try.

Narrator I: And so the farmer settled himself comfortably on a rug and began.

Farmer: Once there was a peasant who sowed wheat. He mowed it when it was grown, threshed it, and put all the precious grain in his granary. It was a rich harvest, one of the best he had ever had. But, this is the irony of the tale. In his granary there was a tiny flaw. A hole big enough to pass a straw through. And when the grain was all stored an ant came and went through the hole and found the wheat. He carried away a single grain of it to his anthill to eat.

King: Ah-ha! This is one of the stories that I have never heard.

Farmer: The next day, another ant came and carried away a grain.

King: Ah-ha!

Farmer: The next day still another ant came and carried away a grain.

King: Yes, yes, I understand. Let us get on with the story.

Farmer: The next day another ant came, and carried away another grain. And the next day another ant came and carried away another grain.

King: Let us not dally with the details, the story is the thing.

Farmer: The next day another ant came.

King: Please, please.

Farmer: But there are so many ants in this story. And the next day another ant came for a grain of wheat, and . . .

King: No, no it must not be!

Farmer: Ah, but it is the crux of the story. And the next day another ant came and took away a grain . . .

King: But I understand all this. Let us pass over it and get on with the plot.

Farmer: And the next day another ant came and took his grain. And the next day . . .

King: Stop. I want no more of it!

Farmer: The story must be told in the proper way. Besides, the granary is still nearly full of wheat and it must be emptied. That is the story. And the next day . . .

King: No, no enough, enough!

Farmer: And the next day another ant . . .

King: Enough, enough, you may have the land and the title of Ras!

Narrator II: So the farmer became a prince and owned a great parcel of land. This is what people mean when they say:

King & Farmer: ONE GRAIN AT A TIME BRINGS GOOD FORTUNE.

(All exit R.)

Narrator: "The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey" is a fable by the Greek slave, Aesop. It is a simple tale that has a moral at the end. One sunny day a miller and his son set off to the marketplace to sell their old donkey.

Son: Father, shall we ride the donkey today?

Miller: No son, we won't ride him for it's a hot day. We want him to look fresh when we sell him.

Narrator: All three walked slowly down the road. Soon they met a farmer.

Farmer: What fools you are! A donkey is to ride isn't it? Then why do you walk?

Narrator: The miller didn't like that.

Miller: Climb up on the donkey, son.

Donkey: Why didn't that joker keep his mouth shut? (*Bray.*)

Narrator: Pretty soon they met a peddler pushing a cart.

Peddler: Aren't you ashamed of yourself young man? Your legs are young and strong. You should let your father ride.

Narrator: The miller wasn't a bit tired but he said:

Miller: Get down, son.

Narrator: And they changed places.

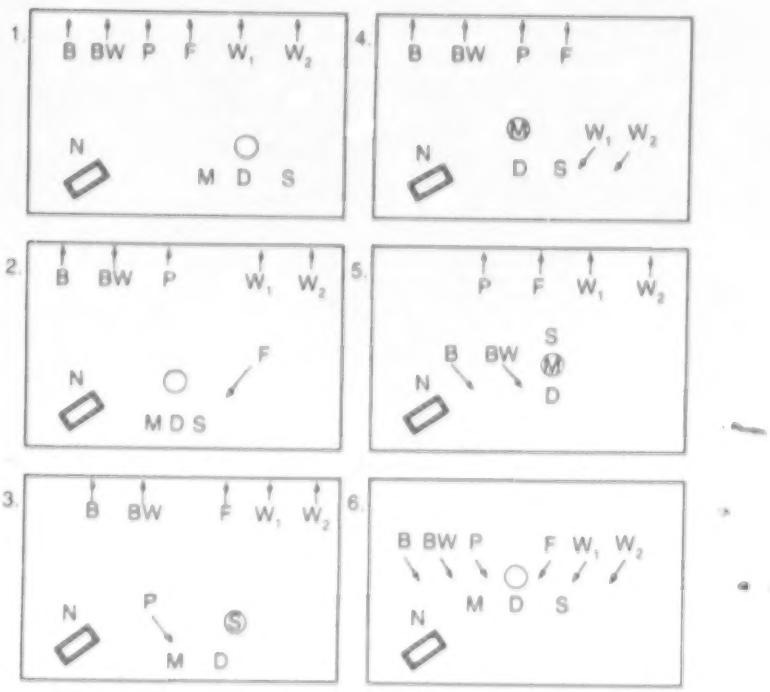


Figure 5. Blocking sketches for "The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey." Symbols: M—Miller, D—Donkey, S—Son, B—Blacksmith, BW—Blacksmith's Wife, P—Peddler, F—Farmer, N—Narrator, ○—Stool, ↑—Face direction.

Donkey: Oi vay!

Narrator: They had not gone far when they passed some women going to the market.

Woman I: What kind of man are you?

Woman II: Look at this! A big strong fellow like you riding while his poor little boy has to walk.

Narrator: The miller didn't know what to do.

Miller: I'm confused.

Narrator: But at last he said,

Miller: Son, get up behind me.

Donkey: Double trouble! Give me an Alka Seltzer.

Narrator: Then a blacksmith and his wife happened by.

Blacksmith: Look at that poor donkey! The poor creature can hardly walk. I call it cruel to overload a dumb animal that way.

Wife: I agree. Those two look more fit to carry the donkey than he is to carry them.

Narrator: So the miller and his son both got down. The father stepped off the road and cut a long pole.

Miller: Let us tie up the donkey's four feet and put the pole on our shoulders.

Narrator: And there was the donkey going to marketplace upside down.

Donkey: What a way to go! I'm seasick.

Narrator: From all sides the people came running. Never had they seen such a sight.

Townspeople I: Some people pitied the miller and his son.

Townspeople II: Some pitied the donkey.

All: (*Pointing.*) Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Narrator: Meantime, the donkey was very unhappy.

Donkey: Boy, am I unhappy.

Narrator: He didn't like being carried.

Donkey: And upside down at that.

Narrator: And he was upset by all the noise.

Donkey: Boy, is it noisy.

Narrator: He started to struggle and wiggle. Just as they stepped on Market Bridge, he got one of his feet loose and kicked hard at the boy.

Son: Ouch, that smarts!

Narrator: He dropped his end of the pole. The next minute, the donkey had rolled off the bridge into the water. And before anyone could fish him out, he drowned.

Donkey: How do you expect me to swim with three feet tied to the pole?

Miller: I tried to please everybody.

Son: But you pleased nobody.

Miller: And now my old donkey is lost.

Narrator: Moral:

All: IF YOU TRY TO PLEASE ALL . . .

Narrator: YOU WILL PLEASE NONE.

Son: Another moral.

Donkey: YOU CAN'T WIN 'EM ALL!

(*All exit L.*)

Narrator: "The Stonecutter" is a beautiful Japanese story about Tasaku, a poor stonecutter who was not satisfied with his lot. The tale tells about what happens to him when he wished for too much.

Tasaku: Tasaku was a lowly stonecutter. Each day the sound of his hammer and chisel rang out as he chipped away at the foot of the mountain. He hewed the blocks of stone that formed the great temples and palaces. He asked for nothing more than to work each day, and this pleased the spirit who lived in the mountains.

Prince: One day, a prince went by. Soldiers preceded him, musicians and dancers followed him. He was clothed in beautiful silk robes, and his servants carried him aloft.

Tasaku: Tasaku watched until the magnificent procession passed out of sight. Tasaku cut no more stone and returned to his hut. He envied the prince. He looked up into the sky and wished aloud that he might have such great wealth. Then he slept.

Spirit: The spirit who lived in the mountains heard him, and that night transformed the stonecutter into a prince.

Tasaku: Tasaku was overjoyed. He lived in a palace and wore robes of the finest silk. Musicians played for him and servants bowed low. He commanded great armies and ruled over the land. Every afternoon Tasaku walked in his garden. He loved the fragrant petals and graceful vines.

Sun: But the sun burned his flowers. He knelt over the withered blossoms and saw the power of the sun.

Tasaku: Tasaku wanted to be as powerful, so he asked the spirit who lived in the mountains to change him into the sun.

Spirit: The spirit heard him.

Tasaku: Tasaku became the sun, and he was happy for a time. To show his power he burned the fields and parched the lands. The people begged for water.

Cloud: Then a cloud came and covered him, and the bright rays of the sun were obscured.

Tasaku: Tasaku then knew the cloud was even more powerful than the sun. He told the spirit to change him into a cloud.

Spirit: The spirit heard him.

Tasaku: Tasaku became the cloud. With his new power he made violent storms. Thunder rolled across the sky, rivers overran their banks, fields were flooded, huts and palaces were washed away.

Mountain: But the mountain remained.

Tasaku: Tasaku was angry because the mountain was more powerful than the cloud. "Make me into the mountain!" Tasaku demanded.

Spirit: The spirit obeyed and then departed, for there was nothing more he could do.

Tasaku: Tasaku became the mountain.

Prince: He was more powerful than the Prince.

Sun: Stronger than the sun.

Cloud: Mightier than the cloud.

Tasaku: But Tasaku felt the sharp sting of a chisel.

Mountain: It was a lowly stonecutter, chipping away at his feet.

Tasaku: Deep inside Tasaku trembled.

(*All exit R.*)

Narrator: We are all foolish and stupid sometimes, but "The Four Silly Brothers" in this English folk tale are very silly indeed.

Once there were four brothers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. One day, as they returned home from work, they talked and sang and remembered what a fine day it had been. Suddenly the eldest brother, Matthew, stopped and said,

Matthew: Are we all here?

All: Of course.

Matthew: Are you sure? I'd better count to make sure. One, two, three, there, I told you someone was missing. We are four brothers yet I can count only three. Someone is still in the fields.

Narrator: The next brother, Mark, said,

Mark: Wait a minute, let me count. One, two, three. Oh dear! One of us is lost. We must find our lost brother.

Narrator: As they rushed off in a great panic, the third brother, Luke, who was good at counting sheep and generally very clever, stopped them.

Luke: I'll count. One, two, three . . . Oh quick! Let's go and find our lost brother before night falls.

Narrator: Off they went, searching and calling for their lost brother until the sun started to go down. John, the youngest brother was beside himself with grief.

John: Let me go and count again before we have to go and tell the sad news to our parents. One, two, three . . . only three.

Narrator: The four brothers were standing in the road, wailing and bemoaning the loss of their brother, when a gentleman came along.

Man: What's all this?

All: We've lost our brother.

John: There were four of us this morning but now there are only three.

Man: Three? How do you work that out?

Matthew: Look.

Narrator: And he counted his brothers.

Matthew: One, two, three.

Narrator: The gentleman smiled as he saw the foolish brothers were not including themselves as they counted.

Man: How much will you give me if I find your brother?

Luke: All our money.

Narrator: They eagerly opened their purses.

Man: Well then . . .

Narrator: He took the money and found a big stick.

Man: Stand here in a line.

Narrator: The brothers did so, and the gentleman bashed them all over the head.

Man: ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR! You silly brothers, you forgot to count yourselves.

Narrator: So, laughing and counting his newfound wealth, the gentleman rode off. The brothers were very happy to find that they were not lost after all. They waved their thanks to the gentleman, and set off home holding their heads and counting their bumps.

All: ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR.

(*All exit L.*)

Narrator: This story is an old Russian folk tale. It shows that people who *lie* are very often caught by their own admissions. It is called "The Clever Judge."

There lived a man in the steppes who was famous for his justice and wisdom. At that time if a man was known for his fairness, people came to him from far and wide to ask him to settle their disputes. And so it was that one day two villagers appeared before this wise man and asked him to settle their quarrel.

Judge: Tell me your story.

Plaintiff: I had to leave my village for I had business elsewhere. All my wealth was a hundred gold coins. I did not come by them easily. I had to work hard for them, and I did not want them to be stolen while I was away. Nor did I care to carry so much money with me on my journey. So I entrusted these gold coins for safekeeping to this man here. When I got back from my journey, he denied that he had ever received the money from me.

Judge: And who saw you give him these gold coins?

Plaintiff: No one saw it. We went together to the heart of the forest, and there I handed him the coins.

Judge: (*Turning to the Defendant.*) What have you to say to this?

Defendant: (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) I don't know what he is talking about. I never went to the forest with him. I never saw his gold coins.

Judge: Do you remember the place where you handed over the money?

Plaintiff: Of course I do. It was under a tall oak tree. I remember it very well. I can point it out with no trouble at all.

Judge: So you do have a witness after all. Here, take my signet ring, go to the

tall tree under which you stood when you handed over the money, set the seal of my signet ring against the trunk, and bid the tree appear before me to bear out the truth of your story.

Narrator: The Plaintiff took the signet ring and went off to carry out the demands of the Judge. The Defendant remained behind and waited for his return. After some time had passed, the Judge again turned to the Defendant.

Judge: Do you think he has reached the oak by this time?

Defendant: No, not yet.

Narrator: After further time had passed, the Judge again turned to the Defendant.

Judge: Do you think he has reached the tree by this time?

Defendant: Yes, by now he must have reached it.

Narrator: Not long after, the Plaintiff returned.

Judge: Well?

Plaintiff: I did just as you said. I walked as far as the forest, and then I went on until I came to the tall oak under which we stood when I handed over my gold coins. I set the seal of your signet ring against the trunk of the tree and I bade it appear before you as a witness. But the tree refused to budge.

Judge: Never mind. The oak tree has appeared before me and it has borne witness in your favor.

Defendant: How can you say such a thing! I have been here all this while, and no tree has stalked into the place.

Judge: But, you said that you had not been in the forest at all. And yet when I asked you whether the Plaintiff had reached the oak, first you answered that he could not have reached it, and the second time you said that he surely must have reached it. Therefore, you were in the forest and you remembered where the oak was under which you stood when the Plaintiff handed his gold coins to you for safekeeping. Now you must not only return him his hundred gold pieces, but you must also pay a fine for having tried to cheat him.

Narrator: So the tree was a witness without budging, and justice was done.

(*All exit U.*)

Narrator: James Thurber, an American writer, was so fond of Aesop's fables that he modernized them for our time. The one we will do is called "The Little Girl and the Wolf."

Wolf: One afternoon a big wolf waited in a dark forest for a little girl to come along carrying a basket of food to her grandmother.

Girl: Finally a little girl did come along and she was carrying a basket of food.

Wolf: "Are you carrying that basket to your grandmother?" asked the wolf.

Girl: The little girl said yes, she was.

Wolf: So the wolf asked her where her grandmother lived and the little girl told him and he disappeared into the woods.

Girl: When the little girl opened the door to her grandmother's house she saw that there was somebody in bed with a nightcap and nightgown on. She had

approached no nearer than twenty-five feet from the bed when she saw that it was not her grandmother, but the wolf.

Wolf: For even in a nightcap a wolf does not look any more like your grandmother than Darth Vader looks like Princess Leia.

Girl: So, the little girl took an automatic out of her basket and shot the wolf dead.

Wolf: Moral: IT'S NOT SO EASY TO FOOL LITTLE GIRLS NOWADAYS . . .

Girl: AS IT USED TO BE.

Narrator: Thank you for listening to our Readers Theatre. You were a good audience and we hope you enjoyed our folk tales. We would like to hear from you, be it fan mail or "pan" mail. Won't you please write to us and tell us what you thought of our presentation? The address is Room 209. Thank you.

(*All enter and bow.*)

Note

1. Material adapted from the following sources: Harold Courlander and Wolf Leslau, "The Storyteller," *The Fire on the Mountain and Other Ethiopian Stories* (New York: Holt, 1950); "The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey" in *Aesop's Fables*, Anne Terry White, ed. (New York: Random House, 1964); Gerald McDermott, ed., *The Stonecutter: A Japanese Folk Tale* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975); "Four Silly Brothers" in *The Wise Men of Gotham*, Malcolm Carrick, ed. (New York: The Viking Press, 1975); "The Clever Judge" in *Tales of Faraway Folk*, Babette Deutsch and Avraham Yarmolinsky, eds. (New York: Harper, 1952); James Thurber, "The Little Girl and the Wolf," *Fables for Our Time and Famous Poems* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940).

ANOTHER PROGRAM SCRIPT: *REALLY FINE PEOPLE*

Really Fine People[1] is a compiled script prepared for Readers Threatre by Shirlee Sloyer. The following production can be played by an entire class divided into groups, or by as few as six readers, each pupil reading several parts. Characters from *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* provide the introductory, transitional, and concluding material and should be played by the same readers throughout.

Cast of Characters

"Charlie Brown" Segments

Patty, a nice girl
Schroeder, helpful
Lucy, a very crabby person
Linus, very smart
Charlie Brown, a good man
Snoopy, the all-American dog

"How to Be a Hero" Segment

In this segment pupils may read more than one part. One reader may be assigned Voice 1, Question 1, and Answer, while another may read Voice 2, Question 2, Moral, and so on.

Voices 1 & 2
Narrators 1 & 2, good storytellers
Gorilla, mean and nasty
Questions 1, 2, 3, & 4
Answer
Hero, very brave
Moral, always right
Another Moral, also right
Aunt Beulah, very loving
Mother, not so loving

"The Three Wishes" Segment

Fairy, knows all
Martin, a tired woodcutter
Margaret, his wife
Sybil, her friend

"The Fisherman and His Wife" Segment

Narrator
Fisherman
Wife
Flounder

"Lovable Looey" Segment

Students who play in "How to Be a Hero" may also read this segment.

Narrators 1 & 2, good storytellers
Father
Mother
Sister
Brother
Flower
Teacher
Little Girl

Segment I. "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown"

Physical arrangement. Charlie Brown sits on tall stool, center. Snoopy sits on short stool to his left. Linus and Lucy stand to the right. Patty and Schroeder stand to the left.

Headgear and props. All wear baseball caps. Linus holds a blanket.

Sound effects. A triangle "ping" signifies the beginning of the sequence.

Lucy X Linus X	Charlie X Snoopy X	X Patty Schroeder X

Patty: The only thing wrong with Charlie Brown is his lack of confidence; his inferiority and his lack of confidence; his clumsiness, his inferiority and his lack of confidence; his stupidity, his clumsiness, his inferiority, his foolishness . . . and

Schroeder: Did you know that Charlie Brown has never pitched a winning baseball game, never been able to keep a kite in the air, never won a game of checkers, and never successfully punted a football? Sometimes I marvel at his consistency.

Lucy: Now, Linus, I want you to take a good look at Charlie Brown's face. Would you please hold still a minute, Charlie Brown, I want Linus to study your face. Now this is what you call a Failure Face, Linus. Notice how it has failure written all over it. Study it carefully, Linus, you rarely get to see such a good example. Notice the deep lines, the dull vacant look in the eyes. Yes, I would say this is one of the finest examples of a Failure Face that you're liable to see for a long while.

Linus: I'm sorry to have to say it right to your face, Lucy, but it's true. You're a very crabby person. I know your crabbiness has probably become so natural to you now that you're not even aware when you're being crabby, but it's true just the same. You're a very crabby person and you're crabby to just about everyone you meet. Now I hope you don't mind my saying this, Lucy, and I hope you'll take it in the spirit that it's meant. I think we should all be open to any opportunity to learn more about ourselves. I think Socrates was very right when he said that one of the first rules for anyone in life is "Know thyself."

Lucy: Well, what's Socrates got to do with it anyway, huh? Who was *he* anyway? Did he ever get to be king, huh! Answer me that, did he ever get to be king? Who was Socrates anyway? Know thyself, hmph!

Charlie Brown: Say Snoopy, do you really think I'm a failure? Look at my face. Is this a failure face?

Snoopy: My teeth are tingling again. I feel like I've just got to bite somebody before sundown or I shall go stark raving mad. And yet I know that society frowns on such an action. So what happens? I'm stuck with tingly teeth.

Charlie Brown: Good grief!

Snoopy: And you know what else? I hate cats. To me, cats are the crabgrass on the lawn of life. I am a cat-hater, a cat-despiser, and a cat-loather. I'm also scared to death of them.

Patty: Lucy, why does your little baby brother, Linus, carry around that silly little blanket?

Linus: (*Swings his blanket around like a cape.*) I am Count Dracula from Transylvania.

Lucy: No you're not. You're insecure.

Charlie Brown: Good grief! We've all got so many problems. We're never going to get out of this life alive. I can't stand it!

Schroeder: Now wait a minute gang. You've got it all wrong. We're really fine people.

All: We are?

Schroeder: Sure. You see we're just complex.

Linus: Complex? What's "complex"? Can we get a vaccination against it?

Schroeder: No, Linus, complex means we're complicated. We've got many sides to our character. We're good . . .

All: (*React to good.*)

Schroeder: And we're bad . . .

All: (*React to bad.*)

Schroeder: We're heroic . . .

All: (*React to heroic.*)

Schroeder: And we're scared . . .

All: (*React to scared.*)

Schroeder: But the important thing is, we're really fine people. Right?

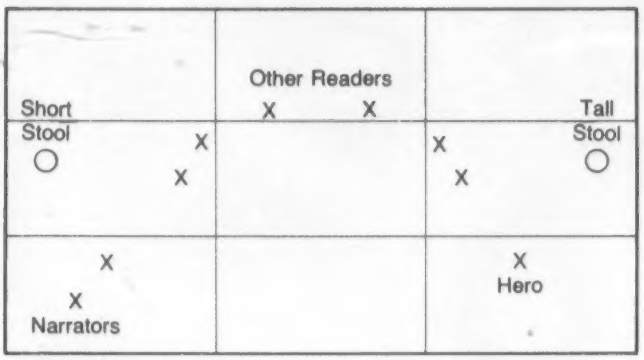
All: Of course right! (*Exit L.*)

Segment II. How to Be a Hero

Physical arrangement. Everyone enters immediately, R, talking excitedly and pointing to a designated spot in the sky. After the line, "It's Superman!" Narrators 1 and 2 move DR standing close together. Hero sits on tall stool, DL (short stool is placed DR). All other readers stand in semi-circle.

Headgear and props. Since one reader may read several characters no hats or props are necessary.

Sound effects. A triangle "ping" signifies the end of the sequence.



Narrator 1: There are many different kinds of heroes. There is the hero who jumps into the water to rescue a drowning puppy. There is the hero who flies *solo* across the Atlantic Ocean for the very first time.

Narrator 2: Charles Lindbergh did *that* in 1927.

Narrator 1: We all know about this kind of hero. But there are *many* other kinds of heroes, and many ways to be heroic. Let us look at some of the things that could happen to you in everyday life.

Narrator 2: Then we'll ask some questions which you should try to answer. The answer to these questions will be discussed and you will be able to decide for yourself whether you are a hero-type person.

Narrator 1: Let's take a situation you might find yourself in some day and see how you would act. Suppose you are flying across the South Pole in a dirigible carrying a cargo of seventy-four gorillas to a zoo in Budapest.

Narrator 2: Budapest is the capital of Hungary, which is a country in Europe.

Narrator 1: Then suddenly, one of the gorillas, the biggest and the meanest, breaks out of his cage and unlocks all the other cages. Then all the gorillas march into the pilot's compartment, where you are steering the dirigible through a terrible hurricane.

Gorilla: Take us back home or we'll set fire to the dirigible, says the meanest gorilla.

Narrator 2: Now, what would YOU do in a case like this? How you answer will show whether you are the stuff heroes are made of.

Question 1: Question one. Do you say, "OK, you win. I'll take you back"?

Question 2: Question two. Or would you pull out your automatic revolver and shoot all the gorillas?

Question 3: Question three. Would you smile and talk to the gorilla in a peaceful way, explaining that the zoo in Budapest is a very cozy place and that gorillas are very well treated there and fed vanilla ice cream, cookies, and strawberries, not to mention *all* the bananas they can eat?

Question 4: Question four. Would you put on your parachute and quickly jump out the window?

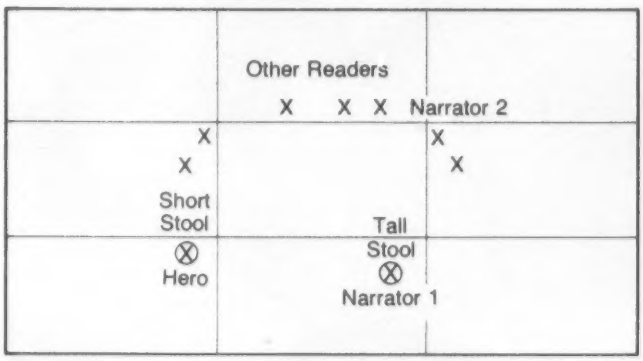
Answer: If YOU are the hero-type person you wouldn't do any of these things. A *real* hero would refuse to get into the dirigible in the first place. A *real* hero doesn't take foolish chances. He would say:

Hero: I refuse to take up an overcrowded dirigible. I won't take more than fifty gorillas at one time!

Moral: It takes courage to refuse to do foolish things.

Another Moral: Don't *ever* take any gorillas anywhere! There will always turn out to be one or two in the group that are mean and nasty.

(*To indicate a scene change, Narrator 1 crosses stage and sits on tall stool, DL. Hero crosses and sits on short stool, DR. Narrator 2 joins the other readers as they all walk once around in a circle ending up in the semi-circle again.*)



Narrator 1: It's not difficult to be a hero when you are in a very dangerous or exciting situation. But it's *not* so easy in the normal, humdrum sort of life that most of us lead. For example, how can you be heroic some dreary August afternoon when you are along on a visit to your Aunt Beulah's? And your Aunt Beulah talks about nothing but her collection of old silver teaspoons. What would you do?

Question 1: Question one. Would you simply sit there on the sofa and scratch and squirm and pretend you care about old silver teaspoons?

Question 2: Question two. Would you slowly slump down in your seat, then slide off onto the floor, then quietly roll over behind the sofa, then weedle out under the piano, crawl silently out the door, slither through the hallway, and sit on the front stoop cooling yourself in the breeze?

Question 3: Question three. Would you suddenly jump to your feet, waving your hands about wildly, and scream:

Hero: (*Jumps up.*) I smell it. I smell it.

Everyone: Smell what?

Narrator 1: Everyone asks much alarmed.

Hero: Odorless hyena gas! It puts you to sleep. It can be fatal.

Everyone: Where? Where? I don't smell it.

Narrator: Everyone yells.

Hero: Of course you can't smell it. It's odorless. Quick! Open the windows! Follow me.

(*All walk around in a circle following hero. End in same place. Hero remains standing.*)

Narrator: Then you climb out of the window, leading everybody to safety.

Hero: It does go away in three hours. Nobody can go into the house until then.

Beulah: My Hero! (*Kisses hero.*)

Narrator: . . . your Aunt Beulah cries, hugging you. Then she takes you all out to a fancy restaurant for lobster tails and French fried potatoes, and then to a very good movie.

Answer: Number one, sit there and pretend you care about old silver teaspoons, is the correct answer. Number two is not a very heroic way to act. No hero has ever been known to crawl, slither, weedle, or ooze. And number three is *much* too complicated. Your mother would probably say:

Mother: Oh shut up and be still!

Moral: Even if you really think odorless hyena gas is escaping from somewhere don't make a fuss about it. Nobody will believe you or do anything about it. Just sit still and try not to squirm too much. The *most* heroic acts are often performed during *very* unexciting times such as long dull visits to relatives.

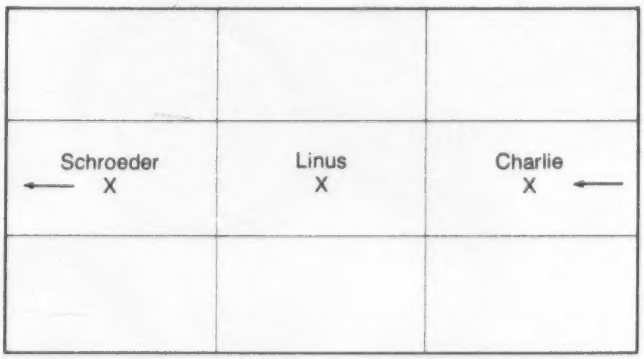
Sound Effects: (*Triangle.*)

(*All exit R taking stools with them.*)

Interlude: Charlie Brown Characters

Physical arrangement. The conversation begins as the characters enter, L. When they reach C, they pause long enough to complete the interlude then exit, R. The effect should be casual; three friends talking as they walk across the length of the stage entering on one end, exiting the other.

Headgear and props. All wear baseball caps. Linus holds blanket.



Schroeder: Linus, do you think I have a heroic character?

Linus: Well not exactly, Schroeder. But I really don't think you have anything to worry about. After all, science has shown that a person's character isn't really established until he's at least five years old.

Schroeder: But I *am* five. I'm more than five.

Linus: Oh well, that's the way it goes I guess, but at least you don't have a foolish character.

Charlie Brown: What's a foolish character?

Schroeder: Well, I know a couple of characters who were very foolish. Listen to this fairy tale called "The Three Wishes."

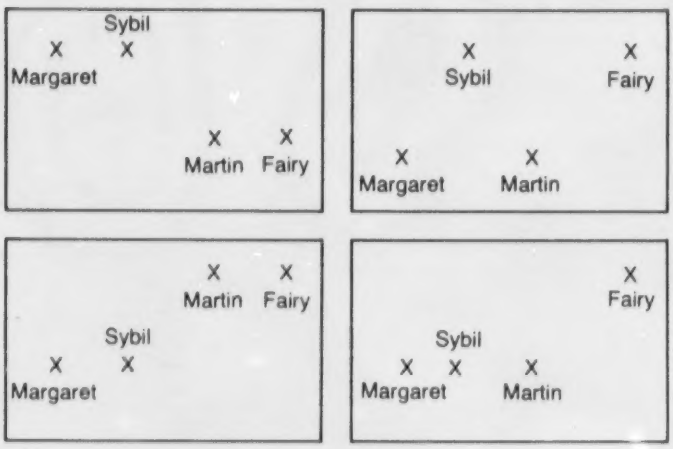
(*All exit R.*)

Segment III. The Three Wishes

Physical arrangement. Margaret, Sybil, and Fairy enter L, and take positions U, facing rear. Martin enters L, speaking as he walks. He stops C, faces front. Each of the four characters utilizes his vertical space, walking U, facing the rear when not in the scene, returning D, facing front when needed.

Headgear and props. Fairy wears headband with star and veiling. Martin wears a lumberjack hat. Margaret and Sybil wear mopcaps.

Sound effects. Knocks on hollow block to represent chopping tree. Cymbal clash each time a wish is made. Triangle "ping" closes the segment.



Martin: Martin, a tired woodcutter, has walked through the forest and sits down on a tree stump to rest.

Fairy: Martin! Martin!

Martin: Hey there! Who's calling?

Fairy: I'm in the tree!

Martin: Where? I don't see you.

Fairy: Listen Martin, I am an unfortunate fairy stuck in this tree. Cut a hole in the bark and let me out. But not too deep, you might hurt me.

Sound Effects: (*Three knocks on hollow block.*)

Martin: Ay, Ay! Wonderful lady, please don't harm me!

Fairy: Harm you, I shall reward you with three wonderful wishes. Here is a ring. Whoever wears it may have three wishes come true, but only three, so

be careful what you wish for. It's easy to waste wishes, but if you choose wisely, you're made for life. Choose wisely, Martin, (*Fading out.*), wisely, wisely . . . (*Walks U, faces rear.*)

Martin: Oh, thank you, thank you! (*Martin faces front, then R towards Margaret.*)

Martin: Hello there! Ha ha, corned beef and steak for me now, where's the butcher, call the butcher—ha!

Margaret: (*Walks D.*) What ails the man, home so early!

Martin: When luck comes into a house it tumbles in at the door and I've proved it. Margaret, I'm as grand a man as the Duke or I will be. We've done with poverty. We've done with potatoes. Throw them to the neighbors' pigs. I'm drunk with joy!

Margaret: (*Sobbing.*) Drunk!

Martin: Look, a ring. A beautiful fairy gave it to me. Look again at it. It's an enchanted wishing ring.

Margaret: I don't believe it. What lady would give you a ring? You look like the back end of an old goat!

Martin: Three wishes she says.

Margaret: Do you believe it, Martin? Let's try it now, let's wish that . . .

Martin: Hush, woman! Don't pop a wish out like that. I'm going to the Duke to find what the three grandest things are that a man can set his heart on.

Margaret: Wait, Martin, someone might steal the ring. Leave it here with me.

Martin: Oh, all right, but be careful, it's a sacred charge, Margaret. (*Turns walks U, faces rear.*)

Sybil: Good morning, Mistress Margaret, and where is Martin off to so early in the day?

Margaret: He's gone to consult the Duke about an important matter, Sybil, but it's no use, I won't tell you.

Sybil: Please, Margaret, I won't tell a soul, I promise.

Margaret: Well, it's such good news I can't keep it. Look at this ring. It's a fairy gift. *Three* wishes!

Sybil: Oh, what fine luck! Rare luck to drink to! I'm your friend, Margaret, drink to your luck any day. Don't forget that. Your old friend Sybil!

Margaret: I'll be the finest lady in the village.

Sybil: And me her best friend!

Margaret: I'll have a coach!

Sybil: And me riding in it.

Margaret: And horses . . .

Sybil: And me behind them.

Margaret: I'll have grand dinners.

Sybil: I'll come to them. I will at that. Well, here's to good luck and long live the fairy! Say, Margaret, do you know what I feel like now? Let's have some sausages.

Margaret: It's so long since I tasted sausages, I wouldn't know one if it looked me right in the face.

Sybil: Yes, sausages! — nice, crisp, crackling, brown sausages.

Margaret: Oh, I wish we had some sausages NOW!

Sound Effects: (*Cymbals.*)

Sybil: What happened? It was like a flash of lightening! It left a pleasing smell though. Sniff now. (*Both sniff.*) If I told you what my nose says, you'd laugh. (*She shifts.*) It says sausages!

Margaret: It does smell like sausages, just fried! Oh, oh, sausages . . . it's a wish come true. Martin will beat me. One wish is gone out of the ring—oh, oh.

Sybil: Nothing is wrong with these sausages. They're good to eat!

Margaret: (*Sobs.*)

Sybil: It's true—you might have wished for a cartload. Martin couldn't have got mad at that! Let's sit down and eat the dish clean and not tell him a word about it. He'll think the fairy cheated him. You can't trust fairies these days.

Margaret: Hurry, sit down, eat quick and we'll stuff—Oh, it's Martin . . .

Sybil: Oh, I just remembered, I have a dentist appointment.

Margaret: Come back, you coward, I won't take all the blame alone!

Martin: It's all settled in the wisest way. We're to have—What's that smell? Sausages! Where did they come from?

Margaret: It was all Sybil's fault! Her mouth watered for sausages and before I knew it I was wishing for them!

Martin: You wished for sausages and you had the ring? (*He grabs it.*)

Margaret: (*Sobbing.*) I forgot all about the ring.

Martin: So you've wasted a fairy wish—I'll show you!

Sybil: Be quiet, Martin, two wishes are enough for a quiet simple man like you. Be sensible. Sit down and eat the sausages.

Martin: What, eat the sausages! I wish they were growing at the end of her nose!!!

Sound Effects: (*Cymbals.*)

Martin: What was that?

Sybil: Another wish come true! It's a rough way those fairies have.

Martin: Another wish, what wish?

Sybil: That the sausages would grow on Margaret's nose. (*Laughs.*)

Margaret: It's true—ohhh, I'm a ruined woman. Look . . .

Martin: They can't be growing on your nose. Sybil—pull them off!

Sybil: Aw! They're hot! They burn me!

Margaret: (*Sobbing.*) Ohh, I'm a ruined woman.

Sybil: Never mind. It's not every woman who can nibble her own nose for breakfast! (*Laughs.*)

Martin: Stop laughing I tell you—stop! Two wishes gone! Two—oh, what

good's the third. What good to be rich like the Duke with that as a wife beside me. Look at her—look. An elephant with his nose in rollers. Stop swinging them. I say! I can't bear it! This ring has brought me nothing but torment. By magic they came and by magic they must go. I wish the sausages were off Margaret's nose!

Sound Effects: (*Cymbals.*)

(*All freeze in position.*)

Fairy: (*Turns; walks D.*) So all three wishes got you nothing. I didn't think they would—for if you only *wish* for things, it will never do you good.

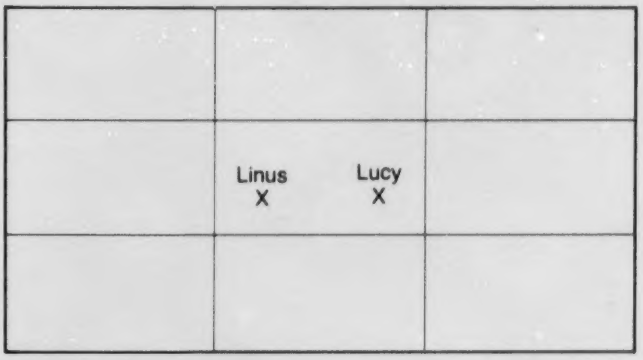
Sound Effects: (*Triangle.*)

(*All exit L.*)

Segment IV. "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown"

Physical arrangement. Linus enters first, R, takes his position as if watching television. Lucy enters L, talking as she does.

Headgear and props. Baseball caps for both characters; a blanket for Linus.



Lucy: Linus, do you know what I intend? I intend to be a queen. When I grow up I'm going to be the biggest queen there ever was, and I'll live in this big palace with a big front lawn, and have lots of beautiful dresses to wear. And when I go out in my coach, all the people . . .

Linus: Lucy.

Lucy: . . . all the people will wave and I will shout at them, and . . .

Linus: Lucy, I believe "queen" is an inherited title. (*Pause.*) Yes, I'm quite sure. A person can only become a queen by being born into a royal family of the correct lineage so that she can assume the throne after the death of the reigning monarch. I can't think of any possible way that you could ever become a queen. (*Pause.*) I'm sorry, Lucy, but it's true.

Lucy: (*Silence, and then . . .*) And in the summertime I will go to my palace and I'll wear my crown in swimming and everything, and all the people will cheer and I will shout at them. . . . (*Pause.*) What do you mean I can't be a queen?

Linus: It's true.

Lucy: There must be a loophole. Nobody should be kept from being a queen if she wants to be one. IT'S UNDEMOCRATIC!

Linus: Good Grief.

Lucy: It's usually just a matter of knowing the right people. I'll bet a few pieces of well-placed correspondence and I get to be a queen in no time.

Linus: I think I'll watch television. (*He returns to the set.*)

Lucy: I know what I'll do. If I can't be a queen, then I'll be very rich. I'll work and work until I'm very very rich, and then, I will buy myself a queendom.

Linus: Good grief.

Lucy: Yes, I will buy myself a queendom and then I'll kick out the old queen and take over the whole operation myself. I will be head queen. And when I go out in my coach, all the people will wave, and I will . . . I will. . . . (*She has glanced at the TV set and become engrossed. Pretty soon Linus turns and looks at her.*)

Linus: What happened to your queendom?

Lucy: Huh?

Linus: What happened to your queendom?

Lucy: Oh, that. I've given it up. I've decided to devote my life to cultivating my natural beauty.

Linus: The trouble with you, Lucy, is you have a greedy side to your character.

Lucy: So what! It's better to be a greedy queen than a little dumb kid with a security blanket.

Linus: Did you ever hear the story of the "Fisherman and His Wife"?

Lucy: What's it about?

Linus: Being greedy.

(*They exit L.*)

Segment V. The Fisherman and His Wife

Physical arrangement. All characters enter together, R, led by the narrator who takes his position, DL. The three other characters stand in a row, C. Isabel and the Flounder alternate facing to the rear when they are out of the scene. The Fisherman turns slightly as he is required to speak to each of them.

Headgear and props. The Fisherman wears a rubber rainhat with a wide brim at back. The Flounder has a large scarf or string of scarves tied about his forehead. (For fun, the fish can wear a pair of snorkle goggles with a snorkle stuck in at the side.) The Wife should change her hats with the granting of each wish. First she wears an old scarf tied under her chin, then a garden hat, a riding helmet, a crown, and finally, a red velvet skull cap trimmed with sequins.

Sound effects. A triangle "ping" ends the sequence.

Isabel X	Fisherman X	Flounder X	Narrator X

Narrator: There once was a fisherman who lived with his wife in a miserable hovel by the sea and every day he went out fishing. Once, as he was sitting with his rod, looking at the clear water, his line suddenly went down far below, and when he drew it up again, he brought out a large flounder.

Flounder: Hark, listen, fisherman, I am no common flounder. I am an enchanted prince. Please throw me back into the sea.

Man: That's all right, I throw back all fish that can talk.

Flounder: Thank you, thank you.

Wife: Husband, did you catch anything today?

Man: No. Well I did catch a flounder who said he was an enchanted prince so I threw him back into the water.

Wife: Did you not wish for anything first?

Man: What should I wish for?

Wife: Isn't it bad enough we have to live in this miserable hovel? You might have wished for a nice clean cottage. He will certainly give us that. Go back and call him. You did catch him and let him go again, he is sure to do it. Now, be off.

Man: I'm off.
Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come I pray thee here to me;
Isabel my willful wife
Does not like my way of life.

Flounder: Hello, fisherman.

Man: Hello, flounder. I had to call you back, my wife said I caught you and I should have wished for something.

Flounder: What would you have?

Man: She would like to live in a nice, clean cottage.

Flounder: Certainly. Return to your wife, she has her wish fully.

Wife: Husband, come inside.

Narrator: There was a pretty sitting room and a bedroom . . .

Man: With a brass bed.

Narrator: And a kitchen and outside there were chicks and hens and a great big fat rabbit . . .

Man: And a vegetable garden and a fruit tree.

Wife: Isn't this nice.

Man: This is nice. You and I will live in this cottage very happily.

Wife: We will think about that.

Narrator: And with that they ate something and went to bed.

Wife: Husband.

Man: Yes.

Wife: This house is too cramped. Go to the flounder and tell him that I would like to live in a big stone castle.

Man: Oh, wife, this cottage is just right for us.

Wife: No, it's too cramped and I've changed my mind and the garden is too small. Now, be off.

Man: I don't want to go back to the flounder. (*Reluctantly.*)
Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come I pray thee here to me;
Isabel my willfull wife
Does not want my way of life.

Flounder: Fisherman so we meet again.

Man: Hello.

Flounder: Give me some fin! (*They slap the palms of their hands together.*)

Man: The cottage was just right.

Flounder: You're welcome.

Man: But my wife changed her mind. She would like to live in a big stone castle.

Flounder: So be it. Return to your wife. She awaits you at the gates of it.

Wife: Husband.

Man: Wife.

Wife: Come inside with me.

Narrator: The walls were hung with beautiful tapestry.

Wife: The floors were covered with rich, thick carpet.

Narrator: The rooms were furnished with golden chairs and golden tables.

Wife: Crystal chandeliers hung from the ceiling.

Narrator: The tables were loaded with every kind of delicate food and the most costly wine.

Wife: Outside there was a courtyard and beyond that forests and beyond that a park half a mile long.

Narrator: Stags, hinds, and hares . . .

Wife: And everything one could wish for. Now, is this not worth having?

Man: Yes, this is worth having. You and I will live in this castle and be content.

Wife: We will think about that.

Narrator: And with that they went to bed.

Wife: Husband, peep out of that window, there, now wouldn't you like to be King over all this land. Go to the flounder and tell him that you consent to be King.

Man: No, no wait, I don't want to be the King.

Wife: You don't want to be the King?

Man: No, no.

Wife: That's all right, I'll be the King.

Man: Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come I pray thee here to me;
Isabel my willful wife
Does not want my way of life.

Flounder: What is it this time, fisherman?

Man: My wife would be the King.

Flounder: Return to your wife, she is the King.

Man: Wife, are you now the King?

Wife: Yes, I'm the King.

Man: Wife, it is a fine thing for you to be the King.

Wife: No, no, husband. I find that time weighs heavy on my hands and I can't bear it any longer. I'm the King but it's not enough, I must be the Pope.

Man: The Pope?

Wife: The Pope.

Man: Wife, this is something that is beyond the flounder.

Wife: Nonsense, if he can make a King, he can make a Pope.

Man: But it's not the same thing; there is only one Pope in the whole land.

Wife: Are you forgetting who you are speaking to? I am the King and you are just my husband. You must obey.

Man: Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come I pray thee here to me;
Isabel my willful wife
Does not want my way of life.

Flounder: Now what does she want?

Man: She would be the Pope.

Flounder: Say that again.

Man: My wife would be the Pope.

Flounder: Go back to your wife, she is the Pope.

Man: Wife, are you now the Pope?

Wife: Yes, now we are the Pope.

Man: Wife, I pray you now, content yourself to remain the Pope, higher you cannot go.

Wife: We shall think about that.

Narrator: And with that they went to bed.

Wife: Why can I not cause the sun and the moon to rise and set? Why? Husband, wake up. Go to the flounder. I will be the Lord of the Universe.

Man: What are you saying?

Wife: If I can not cause the sun and the moon to rise and set, I shall not be able to bear it.

Man: No, no, stay the Pope, you make a good Pope. Do not ask me to go to the flounder.

Wife: Monous tumus scramus! Get out of here!

Man: Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come I pray thee here to me;
Isabel my willful wife,
Does not want my way of life.

Flounder: Fisherman.

Man: Flounder, she would be Lord of the Universe.

Flounder: No, fisherman, this time it cannot be. Now you must return to your hovel by the sea.

Narrator: And there they are staying 'til this very day.

Sound Effects: (*Triangle.*)

(*All exit R.*)

Segment VI. "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown"

Physical arrangement. Lucy and Linus enter L immediately following Segment V. They read their lines as they walk. Charlie Brown and the others enter L and form a huddle around Charlie.

Headgear and props. Baseball caps for all.

Sound effects. A triangle "ping" ends the sequence.

	Patty X	
Lucy X Linus X		Snoopy X Schroeder X
	Charlie X	

Lucy: Wow—what a dummy; she shoulda quit when she had the castle.

Linus: My point exactly!

Charlie Brown: All right, gang, I want this game to be our biggest and best game of the season, and I want everyone out there playing with everything he's got.

Lucy: Charlie Brown, I thought up some new strategy for you. Why don't you tell the other team that we're going to meet them at a certain place, only it isn't the real place, and then when they don't show up, we'll win by forfeit. Isn't that good strategy? Good Grief, I don't understand these managers who don't want to use good strategy.

Schroeder: Charlie Brown, is Lucy going to pitch again? Because if she does, I quit. Do you know what she does? She's always calling me out for a conference on the mound. I go out there, see? I go out there for a secret conference on the mound and do you know what she does? She kisses me on the nose.

All: Ugh!

Charlie Brown: If we grit our teeth and bear down I'm sure we could finish this season.

Linus: Perhaps you shouldn't be a playing manager, Charlie Brown. Perhaps you should be a bench manager.

Patty: That's a good idea. You'd be a great bench manager, Charlie Brown. You could even be in charge of where we put the bench. When we get to the playing field, you could say, "Let's put the bench here," or "Let's put the bench there."

Charlie Brown: I can't stand it.

Lucy: What's the sense of our playing when we know we're going to lose? If there was even a million to one chance we might win, it would make some sense.

Charlie Brown: Well, there may not be a million to one chance, but I'm sure there is at least a billion to one chance. Now come on, Gimme a "T"

All: "T"

Charlie Brown: Gimme an "E"

All: "E"

Charlie Brown: Gimme an "A"

All: "A"

Charlie Brown: Gimme an "M"

All: "M"

Charlie Brown: What d'ya got?

All: TEAM!!

All: There is no team like the best team, which is our team right here.

Lucy: We will show you we're the best team in the very Little League this year.

All: And in no time we'll be big time. With the big league baseball stars.

Linus: For all we have to do . . .

Patty: Is win just one more game.

All: And the championship is ours.

Charlie Brown: Three balls, two strikes, the bases were loaded with two men out. I pitched my curve, but somehow he hit it a good strong clout. "Lucy," I hollered, "It's coming right to you." She caught it as easy as pie—then dropped it.

All: Ohhh!

Charlie Brown: I don't think it's good for a team's morale to see their manager cry.

Snoopy: Snoopy helped out by biting a runner and catching the ball in his teeth.

Linus: Linus caught flies from a third-story window by holding his blanket beneath.

Charlie Brown: Yes, we had fortitude. No one could argue with that. And one run would win us the game as I came up to bat.

Lucy: All right, Charlie Brown, we're all behind you—sort of. Now get a hit, Charlie Brown. This guy can't pitch. He pitches like my grandmother. We know you can do it if you just grit your teeth and bear down. Please, Charlie Brown, please . . .

Linus: For all we have to do . . .

Patty: Is win just one more game.

All: And the championship is ours!

(*All freeze in position for a moment or two. Then a shift in position to show a slight passage of time.*)

Patty: Don't worry Charlie Brown. Heroes don't win all the time, sometimes they lose.

Charlie Brown: All the time?

Patty: Maybe.

Charlie Brown: Oh, how could there possibly be one small person as thoroughly, totally, utterly BLAH as me.

Patty: I guess it's possible, but we all love you and that's what counts. You gotta be a lovable character, right, Charlie Brown?

Charlie Brown: You know Patty, you're a really fine person—sometimes.

(*All exit R.*)

Segment VII. Lovable Looey

Physical arrangement. All characters enter L and move to their positions, DR and DL. Father, Mother, Sister, and Brothers, in a group, RC. Flower, Teacher, Little Girl, in a line, LC.

Headgear and props. Father wears a man's felt hat. A large feathered hat is suitable for Mother. Sister wears a kerchief and Brother a baseball cap. The Flower can sport some petals around her face. The Teacher can wear a beanie or a mortarboard and the Little Girl, a big pink bow.

Sound effects. A triangle "ping" ends the poem

Father X Mother X Sister X Brother X	Flower X	Teacher X Little Girl X
Narrator 2 X		Narrator 1 X

Narrator 1: Once there was a boy named Lovable Looey.

Narrator 2: He hated everyone!

Father: He didn't like his father.

Mother: He cared even less for his mother.

Sister: He positively couldn't stand his sister.

Everyone: Ugh!

Brother: And he never did dig his brother.

Narrator 1: Lovable Looey despised dogs.

Narrator 2: He detested cats.

Flower: He would never smell a flower or stop along the way for friendly chats . . .

Everyone: With friends.

Teacher: Lovable Looey thought his teacher was dreadful.

Little Girl: And the little girl in his class with the big pink bow and the adorable dimple in her chin . . .

Narrator 1: Was definitely not his type.

Narrator 2: But the funny thing is, everyone, . . .

Everyone: Simply everyone!

Narrator 1: Loved Looey.

Narrator 2: Because he had freckles and even with this Women's Liberation thing . . .

Narrator 1: He always opened doors for all the ladies!!

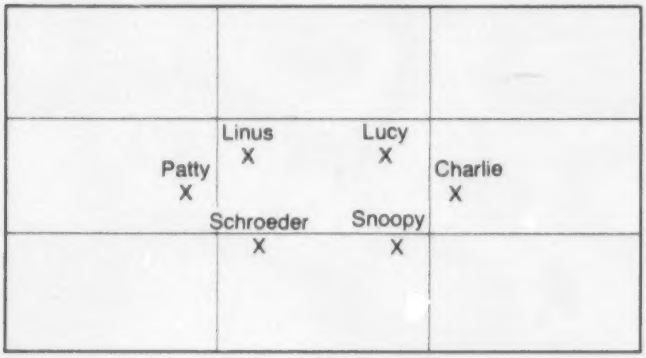
Sound Effect: (*Triangle.*)

(*All exit L.*)

Conclusion: Charlie Brown Characters

Physical arrangement. The characters enter R and move into a huddle position around Schroeder and Snoopy.

Headgear and props. Baseball caps for all. A blanket for Linus.
Sound effects. Triangle "ping" ends the production.



Schroeder: So you see gang. People are complex—we're complicated with lots of sides to our character.

Patty: We're good.

All: (*React to good.*)

Lucy: And we're bad.

All: (*React to bad.*)

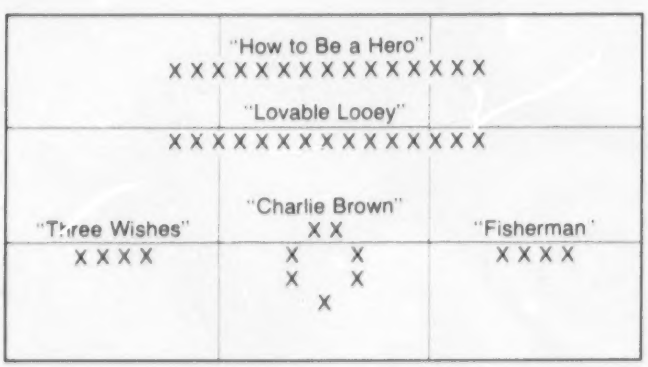
Charlie Brown: But the main thing is we're all really very fine people. Right Snoopy?

Snoopy: I don't know. Yesterday I was a dog. Today I am a dog. Tomorrow I'll probably still be a dog. There's just so little hope of advancement.

All: Good Grief!

(*The entire company enters R and L.*)

Physical arrangement. "Charlie Brown" characters remain DC, "Three Wishes" in a line, DR, "Fisherman and His Wife," DL, "Lovable Looey" and "How to Be a Hero" in a double line across the upper stage.


"How to Be a Hero"
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X
"Lovable Looey"
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X
"Three Wishes"
X X X X
"Charlie Brown"
X X
X X
X X
X
"Fisherman"
X X X X

Charlie: The thing is . . .

All: (*Shout.*) We're really fine people!

Sound Effects: (*Triangle.*)

(*All bow then exit R and L.*)

Note

1. Includes freely adapted excerpts from Clark Gesner's *You're a Good Man, Charley Brown* (New York: Random House, 1967); Harvey Weiss's *How to Be a Hero* (New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1968); "The Three Wishes" in *Favorite Stories Old and New*, comp. Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955), pp. 344-346; Grimm's "The Fisherman and His Wife," in *Time for Fairy Tales*, comp. May Hill Arbuthnot (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1952), pp. 54-58; and an original, unpublished poem, "Lovable Looey."

PART THREE

SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Readers Theatre

Breen, Robert S. **"Chamber Theatre."** *Illinois Speech and Theatre Journal/Illinois Speech Association* 26 (Fall 1972): 20-23.

Describes Chamber Theatre as compared with conventional theatre.

Brooks, Keith. **"Readers Theatre: Some Questions and Answers."** *Dramatics* 24 (December 1962): 14, 27.

Brooks, Keith, Robert C. Henerhan, and Alan Billings. **"A Philosophy on Readers Theatre."** *The Speech Teacher* 12 (September 1963): 229-232.

Discusses audience response to Readers Theatre. Some staging ideas are presented.

Busching, Beverly A. **"Readers Theatre: An Education for Language and Life."** *Language Arts* 58 (March 1981): 330-338.

Describes the instructional potential of Readers Theatre for elementary school children and includes some suggestions for organizing and staging.

Coger, Leslie Irene. **"Theatre for Oral Interpreters."** *The Speech Teacher* 12 (November 1963): 304-307.

Shows how to create and present a script for an audience. Also discusses the values of Interpreters Theatre.

Coger, Leslie Irene. **"Interpreters Theatre in the Secondary Curriculum."** *Illinois Speech and Theatre Journal/Illinois Speech and Theatre Association* 26 (Fall 1972): 17-19.

Offers the values and uses of Interpreters Theatre along with ideas and suggestions for materials.

Coger, Leslie Irene. **"Anywhere's a Stage for Readers Theatre."** *Scholastic Voice* 51 (11 October 1971): 2-3.

Coger, Leslie Irene, and Melvin R. White. **Readers Theatre Handbook: A Dramatic Approach to Literature.** 3rd ed. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1982.

Designed for oral interpretation and Readers Theatre classes, this book presents the origins, concepts, and precepts of Readers Theatre productions. A series of summary descriptions of college presentations as well as sample scripts are included.

Maclay, Joanna Hawkins. **Readers Theatre: Toward a Grammar of Practice.** New York: Random House, 1971.

Illustrates how Readers Theatre can serve as a valuable analytical approach to the study of literature. Some good ideas on selecting material, casting, directing, and performing are suggested.

Malkin, Michael, and Pamela Malkin. **"Readers Theatre: A New Stage for Learning."** *Teacher* 93 (April 1976): 70-72.

Defines Readers Theatre, tells how to create scripts, and gives hints on casting, directing, and presenting classroom programs.

Parret, Margaret. **"Teaching Oral Interpretation to Children through Readers Theatre."** *Illinois Speech and Theatre Journal/Illinois Speech and Theatre Association* 26 (Fall 1972): 5-8.

Shows that Readers Theatre will work for lower grades as well as for intermediate and upper grades. Includes a list of tested materials for the classroom.

Post, Robert M. **"Readers Theatre as a Method of Teaching Literature."** *English Journal* 64 (September 1974): 69-72.

Praises Readers Theatre as a means for students orally and physically to perform a literary work. Recommends the activity for high school English classes. Threaded with examples, the article offers an especially good discussion of the role of narrator.

Post, Robert M. **"An Oral Interpreter's Approach to the Teaching of Elementary School Literature."** *Speech Teacher* 20 (September 1971): 167-173.

Asserts that reading aloud will instill in young pupils a love and appreciation of good literature. Enunciates some principles and techniques of oral interpretation and suggests their possible application in the elementary classroom.

Sloyer, Shirlee. **"Show on the Road: Oral Performers as Reading Motivators."** *Oral English* 1 (Winter 1972): 13-15.

Traces the history of Readers Theatre at Hofstra University and identifies those factors that contribute to motivating audiences to read recreationally.

Sloyer, Shirlee. **"Readers Theatre: A Reading Motivator."** *Selected Articles on the Teaching of Reading.* New York: Barnell Loft, 1977.

Discusses the art of story dramatization for elementary school teachers. Describes how young students will willingly engage in reading activities so as to be part of the performance.

Wertheimer, Andrea. **"Story Dramatization in the Reading Center."** *English Journal* 64 (November 1974): 85-87.

An account of an intermediate school teacher's experience with story dramatization as a means of motivating reluctant readers and developing feelings of sensitivity and understanding among students. Describes materials and procedures used to achieve goals.

White, Melvin R. **"Story-Readers Theatre."** *Dramatics* 42 (January 1971): 12-13, 24.

Discusses Paul Sills's Story Theatre in relation to the history of Readers Theatre. Offers a list of valuable resources.

Worrell, Elizabeth. **"Readers Theatre and the Short Story."** *Oral Interpretation and the Teaching of English,* edited by Thomas L. Fernandez, pp. 45-52. Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1969.

Suggests how the secondary school teacher may utilize Readers Theatre as a vehicle for presenting short stories in the classroom.

Oral Interpretation

Abernathy, Elton. **Directing Speech Activities.** Wolfe City, Texas: The University Press, 1971.

In chapter 5, "Readers Theatre," pp. 51-66, Readers Theatre is defined and its values outlined. Materials for group reading, casting, rehearsals, costumes, and the like are discussed.

Aggertt, Otis J., Elbert R. Bowen, and William E. Rickert. **Communicative Reading.** New York: Macmillan, 1978.

A complete discussion of the forms of multiple reading is offered in chapter 16, pp. 411-429. Readers Theatre and Chamber Theatre are explained and illustrated. Presents quotations as examples with notations about narration.

Armstrong, Chloe, and Paul D. Brandes. **The Oral Interpretation of Literature.** New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963.

Appendix A, "The Staged Reading," pp. 289-293, presents staged reading as a combination of drama and oral interpretation. Offers a good description of how one reader may assume lines of several characters.

Beloof, Robert. **The Performing Voice in Literature.** Boston: Little, Brown, 1966.

Chapter 10, "The Voices in Literature," pp. 315-338, is excellent on the nature of point of view, the relation of the narrator to the story.

Brooks, Keith, Eugene Bahn, and L. Lamont Okey. **The Communicative Art of Oral Interpretation.** Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1967.

Chapter 13, pp. 384-397, is "Readers Theatre." Offers suggestions for group interpretation activities. Discusses literature choices, costumes, music, exits, and entrances.

Lee, Charlotte I., and Timothy Gura. **Oral Interpretation.** 6th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982.

"The Group Performance of Literature," pp. 403-422, offers some useful ideas relating to drama, Readers Theatre, and Chamber Theatre. Includes a discussion of group performance of compiled scripts.

Mattingly, Althea Smith, and Wilma H. Grimes. **Interpretation: Writer, Reader, Audience.** 2nd ed. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1970.

"Readers Theatre," pp. 315-323, includes a short history of group reading with some ideas about the technique of production and selecting literature for Readers Theatre.

Robinson, Karl F., and Charlotte Lee. **Speech in Action.** Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1965.

Chapter 12, pp. 466-479, reports practical suggestions about utilizing plays in Readers Theatre.

Scrivner, Louise M. **A Guide to Oral Interpretation.** New York: The Odyssey Press, 1968.

Some elements of Readers Theatre and Chamber Theatre are discussed, pp. 197-210, including selecting and adapting materials, production style, and performance techniques. Outlines a specific experiment with Chamber Theatre and offers guidelines for the experimenter.

Sessions, Virgil D., and Jack B. Holland. **Your Role in Oral Interpretation.** New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

Chapter 12, "How Do I Read for Readers Theatre," pp. 319-347, is useful.

Veilleux, Jere. **Oral Interpretation: The Re-creation of Literature.** New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

"Making Successful Patterns," pp. 119-120, offers a very good, brief discussion about what constitutes a good reading program. Introductions, transitions, and conclusions are discussed.

Theatre Arts

Berger, Melvin. **Putting on a Show.** New York: Franklin Watts, 1980.

A general guide to theatrical production; makes an interesting book for children who want to learn of the intriguing events backstage as well as onstage. Discusses the director, the actors, speech for theatre, gestures, and movement and offers a good picture of stage directions and stage positions.

Beyers, Ruth. **Creating Theatre.** San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 1968.

Describes specific steps in the process of originating and developing ideas for play creation, writing, and production. Shows the necessity of teacher awareness of the creative process and of ways to encourage it in students. The central theme is that creativity is not a totally spontaneous phenomenon, but can be helped along by certain methods described in the text.

Bordan, Sylvia Diane. **Plays as Teaching Tools in the Elementary School.** West Nyack, N.Y.: Parker, 1970.

Gives the teacher step-by-step instructions on the procedure of writing an original play with children. The technique is a development of the author's classroom work with pupils of all backgrounds.

Davis, Jed H., and Mary Jan Watkins. **Children's Theatre: Play Production for the Child Audience.** New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960.

A comprehensive book containing a storehouse of information about play preparation and acting. It stresses the child's relationship to the performance as audience and as player. Particularly interesting is the appendix which includes sample prompt pages and blocking illustrations.

Johnson, Richard C. **Producing Plays for Children.** The Theatre Student Series. New York: Richard Rosen Press, 1971.

For directors of high school plays, contains an excellent chapter, "Creative Play-making," helpful to anyone planning a Readers Theatre program. Discusses Chamber Theatre and offers an example of transitional material.

Lewis, Mary Kane. **Acting for Children.** New York: John Day, 1969.

A primer which introduces children to the fundamentals of acting; contains thirty-two lessons that offer instruction, homework, and class exercises. Especially useful for Readers Theatre projects are lessons in stage areas, body positions, speech, reading, and blocking.

McCaslin, Nellie. **Act Now!** New York: S. G. Phillips, 1975.

Offers young children practical yet simple suggestions on acting, writing, and producing their own plays, skits, and stories. Includes games and informal exercises to stimulate imagination and recreate feelings.

McSweeny, Maxine. **Creative Children's Theatre.** New York: A. S. Barnes, 1974.

Step-by-step instructions for directing imitative play, creative drama, and conventional plays. Offers exercises to teach stage locations, making stage entrances, speaking, cue responses, and conveying ideas and feelings.

AUTHOR

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